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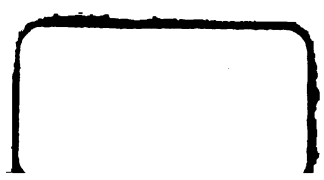
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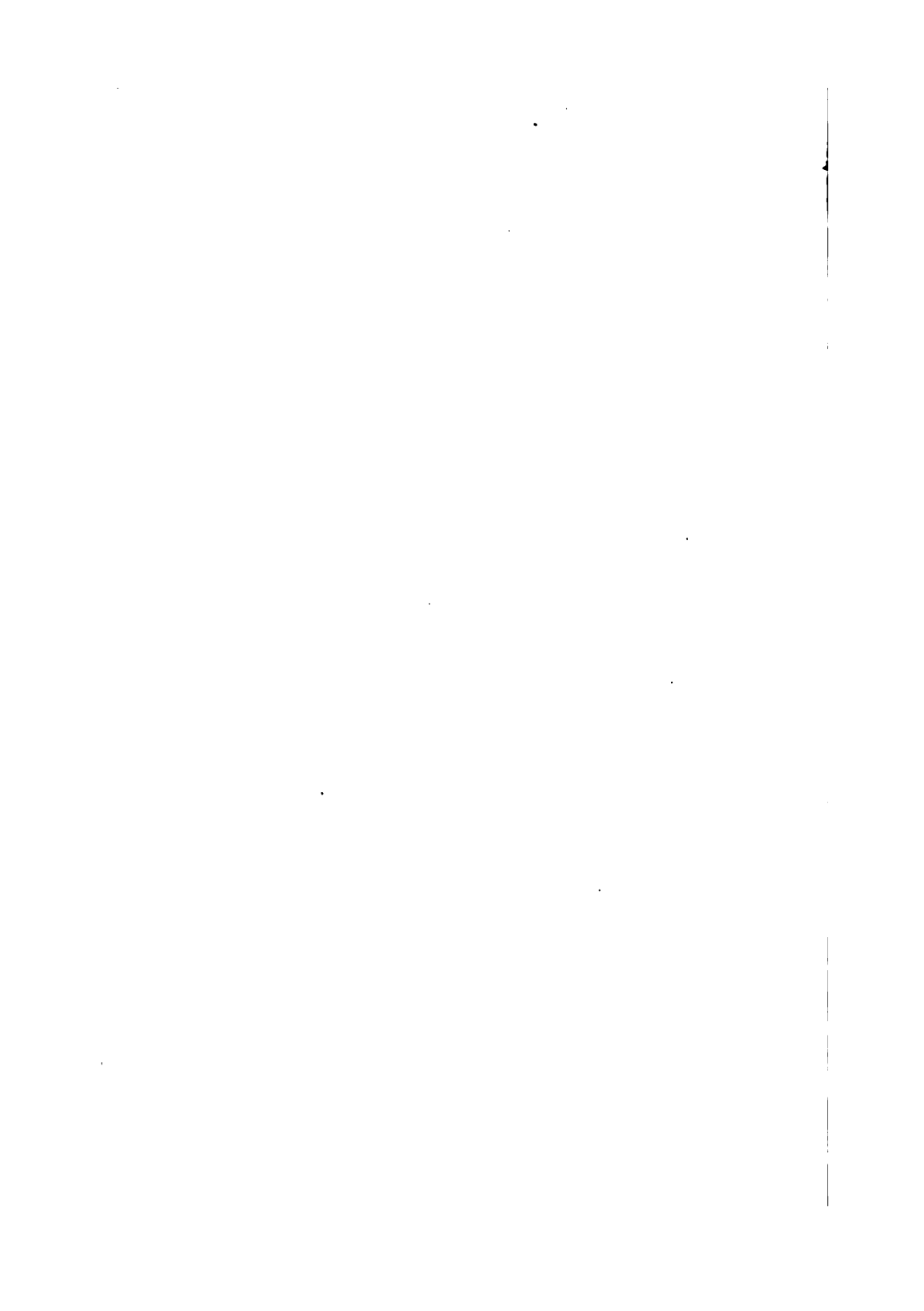
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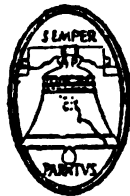
SATAN

A Romance of the Bahamas

By

H: DE VERE STACPOOLE

AUTHOR OF "THE BLUE LAGOON," "THE BEACH
OF DREAMS," ETC.



NEW YORK
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1921

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CONTENTS

PART I

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	PALM ISLAND	1
II	A FLOATING CARAVAN	6
III	BREAKFAST	16
IV	PAP'S SUIT	23
V	THE PORTMANTEAU	34
VI	SKELTON SAILS	58
VII	CARQUINEZ	68
VIII	JUDE OVERDOES IT	79
IX	THE "JUAN" SAILS	96
X	CUSS WORDS	107
XI	THE COMING OF CLEARY	116
XII	AN HONEST MAN	123
XIII	PROBLEMS	130
XIV	HANTS AND OTHER THINGS	136
XV	UNDER WAY	144
XVI	THE STEERSMAN	150

PART II

XVII	LONE REEF	157
XVIII	THE WRECK	169
XIX	MUTINY	174
XX	THE SANDSPIT	183
XXI	DISHED	193
XXII	THE CRABS	199

157

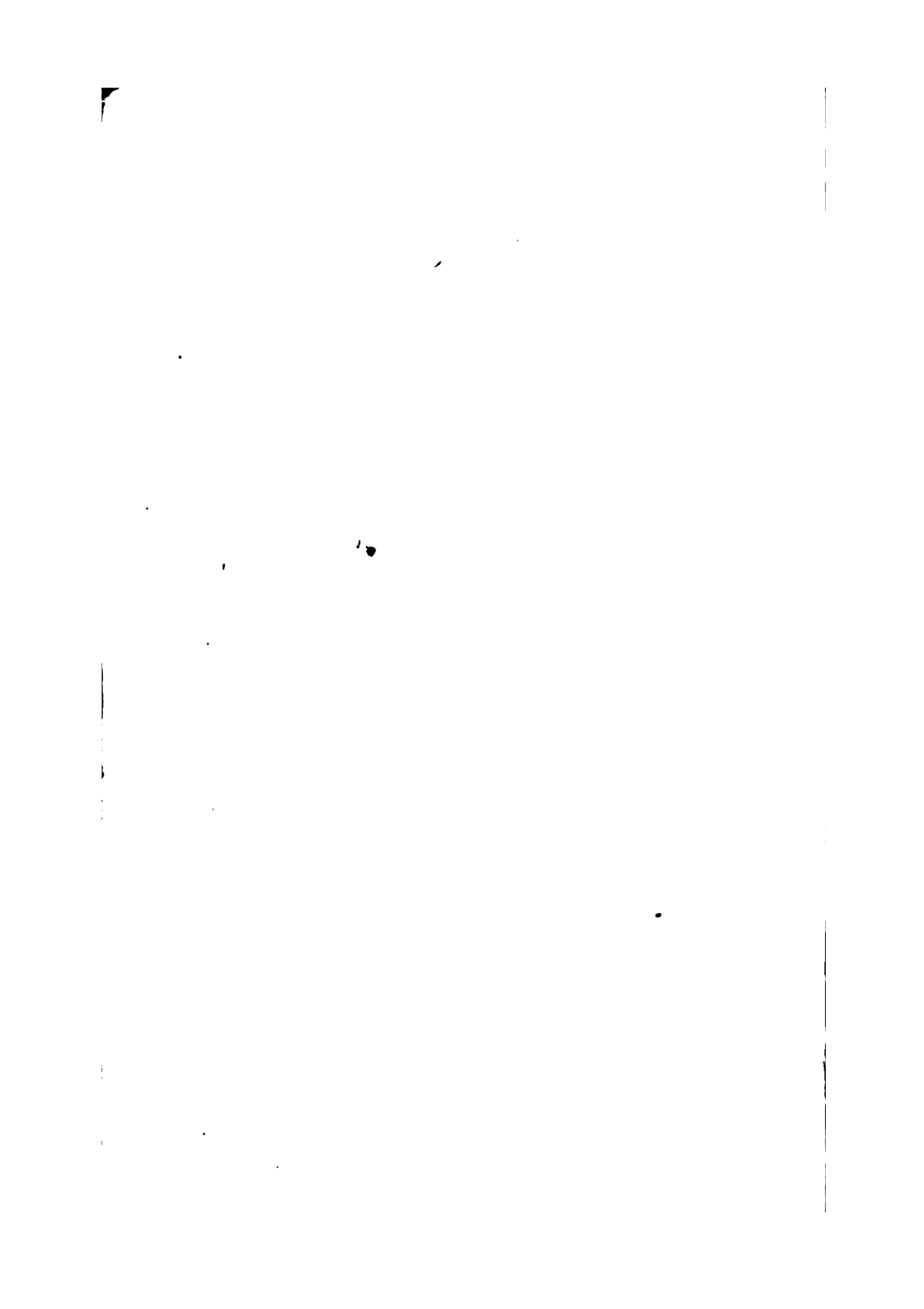
CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
XXIII THE RETURN	206
XXIV A BOTTLE OF RUM	215
XXV THEY FIRE THE FUSE	220
XXVI THE CARGO	226
XXVII CROCKERY WARE	232
XXVIII TIDE AND CURRENT	238
XXIX SATAN IN PARADISE	243
XXX A SECRET OF THE SAND	253
XXXI THE GO-ASHORE HAT	259
XXXII CLEARY!	267
XXXIII THE FIGHT	272
XXXIV "I'LL TAK!"	280

PART III

XXXV THE VANISHED LIGHT	285
XXXVI THE WEDDING PRESENT	295

PART I



SATAN

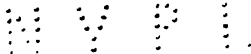
CHAPTER I

PALM ISLAND

THE sky from sea-line to sea-line was crusted with stars, a triumphant, cloudless, tropic night-sky beneath which the *Dryad* rode at her anchor, lifting lazily to the swell flowing up from beyond the great Bahama bank.

She was Skelton's boat, a six-hundred-tonner, turbine engined, rigged with everything new in the way of sea valves and patent gadgets, and she had anchored at sundown off Palm Island, a tiny spot, gull haunted, and due west of Andros.

Skelton was a Christchurch man, Bobby Ratcliffe a Brazenose, and Bobby, tonight, as he leaned on the star-board rail smoking and listening to the wash of the waves on the island beach, was thinking of Skelton, who was down below writing up his diary. Before coming on this "winter cruise to the West Indies in my yacht" Bobby did not know that Skelton kept a diary, that Skelton was so awfully Anglican, so precise, so stuffed with the convenances, that he dined in dress clothes even in a hurricane, that he had a very nasty, nagging temper, that he had prayers every Sunday morning in the cabin



which the chief steward, the under stewards, and the officers off watch were expected to attend—also Bobby. Two other men were booked for the cruise, but they cried off at the last moment. If they had come, things might have been different. As it was, Bobby, to use his own language, was pretty much fed up.

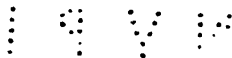
Skelton was a right good sort, but he was not the man with whom to share loneliness, and Bobby, who had plenty of money of his own, was thinking how jolly this winter cruise would have been if he had only taken it on board a passenger liner, with girls and deck quoits and cards in the evening, instead of Skelton.

Bobby was only twenty-two, a good-looking clean youth, well-balanced enough, but desirous of fun. Oxford had not spoiled him a bit. He had no "manner,"—just his own naturalness,—and he had shocked Skelton at Barbados by getting a great negro washing woman on board (she had come alongside in a blue boat) and giving her rum, for the fun of the thing. "Debauching a native woman with alcohol!" Skelton had called it.

Skelton vetoed shark fishing. It messed his decks. He was like an old woman about his decks. "I tell you what you ought to do, Skelly," Bobby had said. "You ought to start a blessed laundry!" They had nearly quarreled at Guadeloupe over sharks.

And again at St. Pierre, where, lying off the ruins of the town, Skelton had likened it to Gomorrah, declaring it had been destroyed because of the wickedness of its inhabitants.

"And how about the ships in the bay?" had asked



Bobby. "What had they to do with the business? Why weren't they given notice to quit?"

"We won't argue on the matter," replied Skelton.

And there was still two months of this blessed cruise to be worked out!

He was thinking of this when Skelton came on deck, his white shirt-front shining in the starlight. He was in an amiable mood tonight and, ranging up beside Bobby, he spoke about the beauty of the stars.

It was chiefly on Bobby's initiative that they had dropped the anchor so that they might prospect the island on the morrow, and as they smoked and talked the conversation passed from stars to desert islands, and from desert islands to the old Spaniards of the West Indies, bucaners, filibusters, pirates, and Brethren of the Coast.

Perhaps it was the starlight, or the tepid wind blowing up from the straits of Florida, or the distant starlit palms of Palm Island that set Skelton off and touched a vein in his nature hitherto unsuspected: whatever it was, he warmed to his subject and for the first time on the voyage became interesting. He could talk! Nombre de Dios, Carthagena, and Porto Bello,—he touched them alive again, set the old plate-ships sailing and the pirates overhauling them, sacked cathedrals of gold and jewels, showed Bobby Tortuga, the great rendezvous of the bucaners and the Spaniards attacking it, men marooned on desolate places like Palm Island, treasure buried—and then all of a sudden closed up and became uninteresting again. The remnants of the boy in him had

spoken, the old pirate that lives in most men's hearts had shown his head. Perhaps he was ashamed of his warmth and enthusiasm over these old romantic things—who knows? At all events, he retired into himself and then went below to find a book he was reading, leaving the deck to Bobby and the anchor watch.

Then the moon began to rise from beyond the Bahamas, a vast, full moon, with the sea seeming to cling to her lower limb as she freed herself. Dusky, at first, she paled as she rose, and now, in her light, the palms of the island and the coral beach showed clear.

Palm Island is a scrub of cactus and bay cedar bushes, half a mile long and quarter of a mile broad, with not more than forty trees. Crabs and turtles and gulls are its only visitors, and desolation sits there visible and naked. But in the moonlight, on a night like this and seen from the sea, it is fairyland—storyland.

Ratcliffe, his mind full of pirates and bucanears, Spaniards and plate-ships, found himself wondering if men had ever been marooned here, if Morgan and Van Horn and all that crowd had ever had dealings on that beach, and what the moon could tell about it all if she could remember and speak. He was thinking this when the creak of block and cordage struck his ear, and past the stern of the *Dryad* came gliding the fore canvas of a small vessel, a thing that seemed no larger than a fishing boat.

She had been creeping in from the sea unnoticed by them as they talked. Skelton had gone below without

sighting her, and she was so close that the slap of her bow-wash came clearly as she passed.

He watched her gliding shoreward like a phantom, and then across the water came a voice, shrill as the voice of a bird:

"Seven fathom!"

And on top of that another voice:

"Let go!"

The rumble—tumble—tumble—of an anchor chain followed, and then the silence of the night closed in, broken only by the far-off wash of the waves on the beach.

This ghost of the sea fascinated Ratcliffe. He could see her now riding at anchor against the palms and bay cedars of the island.

She was shedding her canvas; and now a glow-worm spark, golden in the silver of the moonlight, climbed up and became stationary but for the lift and fall of the swell as she rode at her moorings. It was her anchor light.

He listened for voices. None came. Then he saw a lantern being carried along her deck. It vanished, probably through a hatch.

Then he went below, and, dropping asleep the instant he turned in, dreamt that he was marooned on Palm Island with Skelton, and Skelton was trying to hang him on a palm tree for a pirate, and the gulls were shouting "Seven fathom!—seven fathom—seven fathom!" There came oblivion and the sleep of youth that defies dreams.

CHAPTER II

A FLOATING CARAVAN

NEXT morning, an hour after sunrise, Ratcliffe came on deck in his pajamas,—gorgeous blue and crimson striped pajamas,—a sight for the gods.

The sky was cloudless. The wind of the night before had fallen to a tepid breathing scarcely sufficient to stir the flag at the jackstaff, and from all that world of newborn blue and mirror-calm sea there came not a sound but the sound of the gulls crying and quarreling about the reef spurs of the island.

Amid the glory of light and color and against the palms and white beach lay the ghost of the night before, a frowzy-looking yawl-rigged boat of fifty feet or so, a true hobo of the sea, with wear and weather written all over her and an indescribable something that marked her down even to Ratcliffe as disreputable.

Simmons, the second officer, was on deck.

"She must have come in last night," said Simmons. "Some sea scrapper or another working between the islands—Spanish most likely."

"No, she's not Spanish," said Ratcliffe. "I saw her come in and I heard them shouting the soundings in English—look! there's a chap fishing from her."

The flash of a fish being hauled on board had caught his eye and fired his passion for sport. They had done no fishing from the *Dryad*.

He borrowed the dinghy from Simmons and, just as he was, put off.

"Ask them to sell some of their fish, if they've any to spare," cried Simmons as the dinghy got away.

"Ay, ay!" replied Ratcliffe.

The sea blaze almost blinded him as he rowed with the gulls flying round and shouting at him. As he drew up to the yawl the fisherman lugged another fish on board. The fisherman was a boy, a dirty-faced boy, in a guernsey, and as the dinghy came alongside he stared at the pajama-clad one as at an apparition.

"Hullo, there!" cried Ratcliffe, clawing on with the boathook.

"Hullo, yourself!" replied the other.

"Any fish for sale?"

"Any what?"

"Fish."

The boy disappeared. Then came his voice, evidently shouting down a hatch.

"Satan, below there!"

"Hullo!"

"Here's the funniest guy come alongside wants to know if we've got fish to sell him. Show a leg!"

"One minute," replied the second voice.

The boy reappeared at the rail in the burning sunlight.

"The cap will be up in a minute," said he. "What in the nation are you got up like that for?"

"What?"

"Them things."

Ratcliffe laughed.

"I forgot I was in my pajamas. I must apologize."

"What's pajamas?"

"My sleeping suit."

"You sleep in them things?"

"Of course."

"Well, I'm damned!" said the boy. Then he gave a sudden yell of laughter and vanished, sitting down on the deck evidently, while another form appeared at the rail, a lantern-jawed, long-haired, youthful figure, rubbing the sleep out of its eyes. It stared at the occupant of the dinghy, then it opened its mouth and uttered one word:

"Moses!"

"He sleeps in them things!" came a half-strangled voice from the deck. "Satan, hold me up, I'm dyin'!"

"Shut your beastly head!" said Satan. Then to Ratcliffe, "Don't be minding Jude,—Jude's cracked,—but you sure are gotten up— Say, you from that hooker over there?"

"Yes."

"What are you?"

"Nothing."

Another explosion from the deck, stifled by a kick from Satan.

"But what are you doing here, anyway?"

Ratcliffe explained, Satan leaning comfortably on the rail and listening.

"A yacht—well, we're the *Sarah Tyler*. Pap and me and Jude used to run the boat. He died last fall. Tyler was his name, and Satan Tyler's mine. He said I yelled like Satan when a pup and he put the name on me— Say, that's a dandy boat. I'm wanting a boat like that. Will you trade?"

"She's not mine."

"That don't matter," said Tyler with a laugh. "But I forgot: you aren't in our way of business."

"What's your way of business?"

"Lord! Shut up, Satan!" came the voice from the deck.

"Well, Pap was one thing or another; but we're respectable, ain't we, Jude?"

"Passons to what Pap was," agreed the voice in a quieter tone, and it came to Ratcliffe that the figure of Jude remained invisible, being ashamed to show itself after having geyed him.

"We're out of Havana, and we scratch round and make a living," went on Tyler, "and the boat being ours we make out. There's lots to be had on these seas for the looking."

"Do you work the boat alone?"

"Well, we had a nigger to help since Pap died. He skipped at Pine Island a fortnight ago. Since then we've made out. Jude's worth a man and don't drink—"

"Who says I don't drink?" Two grimy hands seized the rail and the body and face of Jude raised themselves. Then the whole apparition hung, resting midriff high

across the rail, just balanced, so that a tip from behind would have sent it over.

"Who says I don't drink? How about Havana Harbor last trip?"

"They gave her rum," said Satan gloomily, "gave her rum in a doggerly down by the waterside—curse the swabs! I laid two of them flat and then got her aboard."

"Her!" said Ratcliffe.

"Blind, wasn't I?" cut in Jude hurriedly.

"Blind you were," said Tyler.

Jude grinned. Ratcliffe thought he had never met with a stranger couple than these two, especially Jude. Hanging on with the boathook, he contemplated the dirty, daring face whose fine, gray, long-lashed eyes were the best features.

"How old are you?" asked he, addressing it.

"Hundred an' one," said Jude. "Ask me another."

"She's fifteen and a bit," said Tyler, "and as strong as a grown man."

"I thought she was a boy," said Ratcliffe.

"So I am," said Jude. "Girls is trash. I'm not never goin' to be a girl. Girls is snots!"

As if to prove her boyhood, she hung over the rail so that he feared any moment she might tumble.

"She's a girl, right enough," said Tyler as if they were discussing an animal, "but God help the skirts she ever gets into!"

"I'd pull them over me head and run down the street if anyone ever stuck skirts on me," said Jude.

"I'd as soon go about in them pajamas of yours."

Ratcliffe was silent for a moment. It amazed him the familiarity that had suddenly sprung up between himself and these two.

"Won't you come aboard and have a look around?" asked Tyler, as though suddenly stricken with the sense of his own inhospitality.

"But the boat?"

"Stream her on a line—over with a line, Jude!"

A line came smack into the dinghy, and Ratcliffe tied it to the painter ring. Next moment he was on board, and the dinghy, taking the current, drifted astern.

No sooner had his feet touched the deck of the *Sarah Tyler* than he felt himself encircled by a charm. It seemed to him that he had never been on board a real ship before this. The *Dryad* was a structure of steel and iron, safe and sure as a railway train, a conveyance, a mechanism made to pound along against wind and sea; as different from this as an aeroplane from a bird.

This little deck, these high bulwarks, spars, and weather-worn canvas,—all them collectively were the real thing. Daring and distance and freedom and the power to wander at will, the inconsequence of the gulls,—all these were hinted at here. Old man Tyler had built the boat, but the sea had worked on her and made her what she was, a thing part of the sea as a puffin.

Frowzy looking at a distance, on deck the *Sarah Tyler* showed no sign of disorder. The old planking was scrubbed clean and the brass of the little wheel shone.

There was no raffle about, nothing to cumber the deck but a boat,—the funniest-looking boat in the world.

"Canvas built," said Tyler, laying his hand on her; "Pap's invention; no more weight than an umbrella. No, she ain't a collapsible: just canvas and hickory and cane. That's another of Pap's dodges over there, that sea anchor, and there's 'nother, that jigger for raising the mudhook. Takes a bit of time, but half a man could work it, and I reckon it would raise a battleship. There's the spare, same as the one that's in the mud—ever see an anchor like that before? Pap's. It's a patent, but he was done over the patentin' of it by a shark in Boston."

"He must have been a clever man," said Ratcliffe.

"He was," said Tyler. "Come below."

The cabin of the *Sarah Tyler* showed a table in the middle, a hanging bunch of bananas, seats upholstered in some sort of leather, a telltale compass fixed in the ceiling, racks for guns and nautical instruments, and a bookcase holding a couple of dozen books. A sleeping cabin guarded by a curtain opened aft. Nailed to the bulkhead by the bookcase was an old photograph in a frame, the photograph of a man with a goatee beard, shaggy eyebrows, and a face that seemed stamped out of determination—or obstinacy.

"That's him," said Jude.

"Your father?"

"Yep."

"It was took after Mother bolted," said Tyler.

"She took off with a long-shore Baptis' minister," said

Jude. "Said she couldn't stand Pap's unbelievin' ways."

"He made her work for him in a laundry," said Tyler.

"It was at Pensacola, up the gulf, and a year after, when we fetched up there again, she came aboard and died. Pap went for the Baptis' man."

"He wasn't any more use for a Baptis' minister when Pap had done with him," said Jude. "That's his books—Pap's. There's dead loads more in the spare bunk in there."

Ratcliffe looked at the books. Old man Tyler's mentality interested him almost as much as the history of the Tyler family,—"Ben Hur," Paine's "Age of Reason" and "Rights of Man," Browne's "Popular Mechanics," "The Mechanism of the Watch," "Martin Chuzzlewit," and some moderns, including an American edition of "Jude the Obscure."

"Some of those came off a wreck he had the pickin's of," said Tyler, "a thousand-tonner that went ashore off Cat Island."

"That was before Jude was born," said Ratcliffe.

"Lord! how do you know that?" said Jude.

Ratcliffe laughed and pointed to the book. "It's the name on that book," said he. "I didn't know: I just guessed."

"I reckon you're right," said Tyler, opening a locker and fetching out cups and saucers and plates and dumping them on the table. "Not that it matters much where it come from, but you've got eyes in your head, that's sure. Say, you'll stay to breakfast, now you're aboard?"

"I'd like to," said Ratcliffe, "but I ought to be getting back: they won't know what's become of me. And besides I'm in these."

"That's easy fixed," said Tyler. "Jude, tumble up and take the boat over to the hooker and say the gentleman is stayin' to breakfast an'll be back directly after. I'll fix him for clothes."

Jude vanished, and Tyler, going into the after cabin, roused out an old white drill suit of "Pap's" and a pair of No. 9 canvas shoes.

"They're new washed since he wore them," said Tyler. "Slip 'em on over your what's his names and come along and lend me a hand in the galley—can you cook?"

"You bet!" said Ratcliffe.

Eased in his mind as to the *Dryad*, the boy in him rose to this little adventure, delightful after weeks of routine and twenty years of ordered life and high respectability. He had caravanned, yachted in a small way, fancied that he had at all events touched the fringe of the Free Life—he had never been near it. These sea gipsies in their grubby old boat were It! A grim suspicion that these remains of the Tyler family sailed sometimes pretty close to the law and that their sea pickings were, to put it mildly, various did not detract in the least from their charm. He guessed instinctively they were not rogues of a bad sort. The lantern-jawed Satan had not the face of a saint. There were indications in it indeed of the possibility of a devilish temper no less than a desperate daring, but not a trace of meanness. Jude was astonishingly and patently honest, while old man Tyler, whose

presence seemed still to linger on in this floating caravan, had evident titles, of a sort, to respect.

He was helping to fry fish over the oil-stove in the little galley when Jude returned with the information, delivered through the shouting of the frying-pan, that everything was all right, and the message had been delivered to a "guy" in a white coat who was hanging his fat head over the starboard rail of the *Dryad*; that he had told her to mind his paint; that she had told him not to drop his teeth overboard, and he had "sassed" her back; that the *Dryad* was a dandy ship, but would be a lot dandier if she were hove up on some beach convenient for pickin' her.

Then she started to make the coffee over an auxiliary stove, mixing her industry with criticisms of the cookery and instructions as to how fish should be fried.

"Jude does the cookin' mostly," said Tyler, "and we'd have hot rolls only we were under sail last night and she hadn't time to set the dough. We'll have to make out with ship's bread."

Considering the condition of Jude's grubby hands, Ratcliffe wasn't sorry.

CHAPTER III

BREAKFAST

THE amount of food those two put away was a revelation to Ratcliffe, and from start to finish of the meal they never stopped talking. One being silent, the other took up the ball. They had cottoned to Ratcliffe, evidently from the very first moment, for, at the very first moment, Tyler had been communicative about himself and his ship and his way of life. An ordinary ship's officer coming alongside would have got fish at a price if he had been civil or a fish flung at his head if he had given "sass": Ratcliffe got friendship.

It was maybe his youth and the fact that all young people are Freemasons that did the business; the humor of the gorgeous pajamas may have helped. Anyhow, the fact remained. He had secured something that knowledge or position or fortune could not have bought,—the good will and conversation of this pair, the history of the Tylers, and more than a hint of their life on these seas. They had four thousand dollars in the bank at Havana left by Pap, not to be touched unless the *Sarah Tyler* came to smash. They had no house rent or rates; no expenses but harbor dues, food, oil, and tobacco, and not much expense for food—at least just at present.

Tyler winked across the table at Jude and Jude grinned.

"Shut your head," said Jude, "and don't be givin' shows away!" then suddenly to Ratcliffe, "We've got a cache."

"Who's giving shows away now?" asked Tyler.

"Oh, he won't split," said Jude.

"It's on the island here," said Tyler, "near a ton of stuff, canned. A brig went ashore south of Mariguana. We picked up the crew and heard their yarn and got the location. Then a big freighter came along and took the men off us. The wreck was only a hundred and fifty miles from our position, and we reckoned the salvage men wouldn't be on the spot for a fortnight or more and something was due to us for savin' that crew; so we lit out for the wreck. We had four days' work on her. She was straddled on a reef with twenty fathoms under her counter and a flat calm, all but a breathin' of wind. We made fast to her, same as if she'd been a wharf. We had the nigger then to help, and we took enough grub to last us two years an' fourteen boxes of Havana cigars and a live cat that was most a skeleton."

"She croaked," put in Jude. "Satan fed her half a can of beef cut small, and then she scoffed half a bucket of water—that bust her."

"We wouldn't have been so free in taking the things but for the lie of the hooker on the reef and the weather that was sure coming," said Tyler. "We knew all about the weather and the chances. And we didn't cast off from that hooker an hour too soon! We were ridin' out

that gale three days, and when we passed the reef again making west the brig was gone."

"And you cached the stuff here?"

"Yep."

"But we hadn't to make no cache hole," put in Jude. "Pap had one here. It's among the bushes—and he didn't make it, neither."

"It's all coral rock a foot under the bushes," said Tyler, "and there's a hole you drop down six foot, that leads to a cave as cool as a refrigerator; so the goods would keep to the last trumpet. The old Spaniards must have cut it to hide their stuff in. Pap dropped on it by chance. Said they'd used it for hidin' gold and such. Not that he believed in the buried treasure business—sunk ships is different."

Jude, who was hacking open a can of peaches, suddenly made an awful face at Satan. It had the effect of cutting him short. Ratcliffe refused the peaches. He sat watching this pair of cormorants and thinking that the cache must be pretty big if it held two years' provisions for them.

Then suddenly he said so, laughing and without giving the least offense. Tyler explained that the cache was not their only larder: there were fish and turtle and turtle eggs, birds sometimes, fruit to be had for next to nothing, often for nothing. The only expense was for tobacco, and he had not paid ten cents for tobacco since last fall and wouldn't want to for a year to come; clothes, and they didn't want much clothes, Jude did the mending and patching; paint, and the *Sarah Tyler* had ways and means

of getting paint and all such, spars and so on. He gave a wonderful instance:

Before Christmas last they had chummed up with a big yacht on the Florida coast near Cedar Cays. Thelusion was the owner, a man from New York. He took a fancy to the *Sarah* and her way of life, and he and his crew helped to careen her in a lagoon back of the reefs, cleaned her copper (she was dead foul with barnacles and weeds), gave her a new main boom and foresail and some spare canvas, and all for nix. He had no paint, or he would have painted her. He drank champagne by the bucket, and he wanted to quit the yacht and go for a cruise with them, only his missus who was on board wouldn't let him.

Ratcliffe thought he could visualize Thelusion.

"She was a mutt," put in Jude, "with a voice like a muskeeter."

"She wanted to 'dopt Jude and stick a skirt on her," said Tyler.

"Handed me out a lot of sick stuff about sayin' prayers and such," hurriedly cut in Jude.

"And put the nightcap on it by kissin' her," finished Tyler.

Jude's face blazed red like a peony.

"If you chaps have had enough, I'm goin' to clear," said Jude.

"Right!" said Satan, rising, and she cleared, vanishing with the swiftness of a rabbit up the companionway.

Tyler fetched out a box of cigars. They were Ramon Alones.

"She won't speak to me now for half a day," said Tyler. "If you want to guy Jude, tell her she's a girl. I wouldn't a told you, only you're not in our way of life and so can't make trouble. No one knows. There's not a man in any of the ports knows: she goes as me brother. But the Thelusson woman spotted her on sight— Come on deck."

Jude was emptying a bucket of refuse overboard, then she vanished into the galley, and Ratcliffe, well fed, lazy, and smoking his cigar, leaned for a moment over the rail before taking his departure, talking to Tyler.

To starboard lay Palm Island, with the sea quietly creaming on the coral beach and the palms stirring to the morning wind, to port the white *Dryad* riding to her anchor on the near-shore blue, and beyond the *Dryad* the violet of the great depths spreading to the far horizon, beyond which lay Andros, and the islands, reefs, and banks from Great Abeco to Rum Cay. Not a sail on all that sea, nor a stain on all that splendor: nothing but the gulls wheeling and crying over the reefs to southward.

But Satan's mind as he leaned beside Ratcliffe was not engaged by the beauty of the morning or the charm of the view. Satan was a dealer with the sea and the things that came out of the sea or were even to be met with floating on the waves. Ratcliffe was one of these things.

"You've never had no call to work?" said Satan tentatively. "You've lots of money, I s'pect, and can take things easy."

"Yes, I suppose so."

"Like fishin'?"

"You bet!"

"Well, if you ever wants to see good fishin' and more than ordinary folk see of the islands here, drop me a word to Havana. Kellerman, marine store dealer, Havana, will get me. He's a pal of mine. I fetch up in Havana every six months or so—and there's more than fishin'—"

Tyler stopped short, then he spat overboard and began to fill his pipe. He had no use for cigars—much.

"How do you mean more than fishing?"

"Well, I don't know. We're underhanded a bit for any big job and I wouldn't trust most men. They don't grow trustable parties in Havana, nor the coast towns—not much. I've taken a likin' to you somehow or 'nother, and if ever we come together again I'll tell you maybe somethin' that's in my mind. You see, between Pap and me and the old *Sarah*, we've seen close on thirty years of these waters right from Caicos to N'y'Orleans and down to Trinidad. Turtle egg huntin' and fishin' and tradin', there's not a reef or cay we don't know. The old *Sarah* could find her way round blind. Put her before the wind with the wheel half a spoke weather helm and leave her, and she'd sniff the reefs on her own."

"You were saying about something more than fishing," persisted Ratcliffe, whose curiosity had been, somehow, aroused.

"I was," said Tyler; "but I'm not free to speak about private affairs without Jude, and there's no use in tacklin' her when she's snorty. Listen to that!"

Sounds were coming from the galley as of a person banging pots and pans about.

Tyler chuckled.

"It's always the same when her dander is up,—she starts cleanin' and dustin' and makin' hell of the place. Mother was the same. I reckon a woman can't help bein' a woman, not if she had a hundred pair of breeches on."

"Well," said Ratcliffe, "I'd like to come for a cruise, and I will some day, I hope. Maybe I'll see you on the island later. I was intending going ashore today to have a look round: that's why we anchored here."

"Maybe I'll see you ashore then," said Tyler, "but if I'm not there, mind and say nothin' of the cache."

"Right!"

CHAPTER IV

PAP'S SUIT

JUDE, having been fetched out of the galley, the canvas boat was got overboard.

Ratcliffe had offered to shed Pap's suit and return in his pajamas as he had come, but Tyler vetoed the idea. The far-seeing Satan, who had snaffled a careen and clean up, not to speak of a main boom and spare canvas, out of Thelusson, had an object in view.

"It's no trouble," said he. "You take the dinghy, and we'll take the boat and fetch the duds back. It's late in the mornin' for you to be boarding your ship in them colored things."

One of the big fish caught that morning was dropped into the boat as a "present for the yacht," and they started.

The accommodation ladder was down and Simmons and a quartermaster received Ratcliffe. As he went up the side he heard Tyler shouting to Simmons something about the fish. There was no sign of Skelton on deck, for which he was thankful, then he dived below to change.

Now "Pap's" suit had been constructed for a man of over six feet and broad in proportion and a man, more-

over, who liked his clothes loose and easy. On Ratcliffe they recalled the vesture of Dr. Jekyll on Mr. Hyde. The saloon door was closed. He opened it, and found himself face to face with Skelton, who was sitting at one end of the saloon table reading from a book, while Strangways the captain, Norton the first officer, Prosser the steward, and sundry others ranged according to their degree sat at attention.

It was Sunday morning. He had forgotten that fact, and there was no drawing back. He reached his cabin, mumbling apologies to the dead silence which seemed crystallized round Skelton, closed the door, and stuffed his head among the pillows of his bunk to stifle his laughter, then he undressed and dressed.

As he dressed he could hear through the open port the voice of Tyler from alongside. The voice was pitched in a conversational key; it was saying something about a lick of white paint. He was talking evidently to Simmons.

Then, fully dressed, with the bundle of clothes and the canvas shoes under his arm, Ratcliffe peeped into the saloon. The service was over and the saloon was empty. He reached the deck. It was deserted save for a few hands forward and Simmons.

Then he came down the accommodation ladder to the stage, and handed the clothes over to Satan.

A drum of white paint and a coil of spare rope were in the boat close to Jude, and Satan was saying to Simmons something about a spare ax.

"Well, if you haven't got one, there's no more to be

said," finished Satan; then to Ratcliffe, "See you ashore, maybe."

Jude grinned kindly, and they pushed off, the boat a strake lower in the water with their loot.

The fat-faced Simmons watched them with the appearance of a man just released from mesmerism.

"That chap would talk the hat off one's head," said he. "I'll have h—l to pay with Norton over that paint; most likely I'll have to put my hand in my own pocket for it. But he's a decent chap, that fellow, but sharp—the way he landed me with that fish for a bait!"

"He's all there," said Ratcliffe.

"So's the boy," said Simmons. "Come alongside after you'd gone, to say you were staying to breakfast with them. Told him to mind and not damage the paint. Let out like a bargee at me—and Sir William Skelton listening!"

"Where's Sir William now, Simmons? He wasn't in the saloon when I'd finished dressing."

"I expect he's in his cabin," said Simmons.

Ratcliffe got a book and, taking his seat under the double awning sheltering the quarterdeck, tried to read. He had chosen a History of the West Indies, the same book most likely from which Skelton had "cadged" his information of the night before. The printed page was dull, however, compared to the spoken word, and he found himself wondering how it was that Skelly could have warmed him up so to all this stuff and yet be such an angular stick-in-the-mud in ordinary life. What made him such a superior person? What made him at thirty

look forty, sometimes fifty, and what made him, Ratcliffe, fear Skelly sometimes, just as a schoolboy fears a master?

He guessed he was in for a wiggling now for cutting breakfast and appearing like a guy before the officers, and he knew instinctively the form the wiggling would take,—a chilly manner and studious avoidance of the subject, that would be all,—Christchurch on a wet Sunday for forty-eight hours, with the Oxford voice and the Oxford manner accentuated and thrown in.

At this moment Sir William Skelton, Bart., came on deck,—a tall, thin man, clean shaved, like a serious-minded butler in a yachting suit of immaculate white drill. His breeding lay chiefly in his eyes: they were half-veiled by heavy lids. He had an open mother-of-pearl-handled penknife in his hand.

Free of the saloon hatch and not seeing Ratcliffe, he stopped dead like a pointer before game and called out "Quartermaster!"

A quartermaster came running aft.

Some raffle had been left on the scupper by the companionway, a fathom or so of old rope rejected by Tyler as not being the quality he was "wantin'."

He ordered it to be taken forrard, then he saw Ratcliffe and nodded.

"'Morning," said Skelton.

He walked to the rail and stood with his hand on it for a moment, looking at the island and the *Sarah Tyler*.

Jude and Satan were at work on something aft. In

a minute it became apparent what they were doing. They were rigging an awning in imitation of the *Dryad's*, an impudent affair made out of old canvas brown with weather and patched from wear.

It was like seeing a beggar woman raising a parasol.

Skelton sniffed; then he turned and, leaning with his back against the bulwarks, began attending to his left little fingernail with the penknife.

"Ratcliffe," said Skelton suddenly and apparently addressing his little finger, "I *wish* you wouldn't!" He spoke mildly, in a vaguely pained voice. It was as though Ratcliffe had acted in some way like a bounder; more, and, wonderfully, he actually made Ratcliffe feel as though he had acted in some way like a bounder. He was Ratcliffe's host; that gave an extra weight to the words. The whole thing was horrible.

"Wouldn't what?" said Ratcliffe.

Skelton had been rather hit in his propertities by a man going off his boat in pajamas and remaining away to breakfast on board a thing like the *Sarah Tyler* in his pajamas; but the real cause of offense was "Pap's" suit suddenly appearing at Sunday morning prayers. The chief steward had grinned.

Skelton, though a good sailor, an excellent shipmaster, and as brave as a man need be, was a highly nervous individual. A general service on deck for the whole crew was beyond him: he compromised by conducting a short service in the saloon. Even that was a tax on him. The entrance of Ratcliffe in that extraordinary get-up had joggled his nervous system.

"If you can't understand, I can't explain," said Skelton. "If our cases had been reversed, I should have apologized. However, it doesn't matter."

"Look here, Skelly!" said Ratcliffe. "I'm most awfully sorry if I have jumped on your corns, and I'll apologize as much as you want, but the fact of the matter is we don't seem to hit it off exactly, do we? You are the best of good people, but we have different temperaments. If those other fellows had come along on the cruise, it would have mixed matters more. We want to be mixed up in a big party more, you and I, if we want to get on together."

"I told you before we started I disliked crowds," said Skelton, "and that only Satherthwaite and Magnus were coming. Then, when they failed, you said it didn't matter, that we should be freer and more comfortable alone."

"I know," said Ratcliffe. "It was my mistake, and besides I didn't want to put you off the cruise."

"Oh, you would not have put me off. I should have started alone. I am dependent on no one for society."

"I believe you would have been happier alone."

"Perhaps," said Skelton with tight lips.

"Well then, shove me ashore, somewhere."

"That is talking nonsense!" said Skelton.

Ratcliffe had risen and was leaning over the rail beside the other. His eyes were fixed on the *Sarah Tyler*, the disreputable *Sarah*, and as he looked at her Jude and Satan suddenly seemed to him real live free human be-

ings and Skelton as being not entirely alive nor, for all his wealth, free.

It was Skelton who gave the Tylers a nimbus, extra color, fascination, especially Jude. There was a lot of fascination about Jude, even without the background of Skelton.

"It's not talking nonsense a bit," said he, "and, if you can trundle along the rest of the cruise alone, I'll drop you here."

"Drop you on this island?"

"No—I'd like to go for a cruise with those chaps—I mean that chap in the mud barge over there. He asked me, any time I wanted to."

"Are you in earnest?"

"Of course I am. It would be no end of a picnic, and I want to shove round these seas. I can get a boat back from Havana."

Skelton felt that this was the washerwoman of Barbados over again,—irresponsibility—bad form. He was, under his courteousness as a host, heartily sick of Ratcliffe and his ways and outlook. A solitary by inclination, he would not at all have objected to finishing this cruise by himself. All the same, he strongly objected to the idea just put before him.

What made him object? Was he insulted that the *Dryad* should be turned down in favor of the frowzy, disreputable-looking *Sarah Tyler*, that the companionship of the Tylerites should be preferred to his? Did some vague instinct tell him they were the better people to be

with if one wanted to have a good time? Was high conventionality outraged as though, walking down Piccadilly with Ratcliffe, the latter were to seize the arm of a dustman?

Who knows? But he bitterly and strongly objected. And how and in what words did he show his objection and anger?

"Then go, my dear fellow, go!" said he as though with all the good will in the world.

"Right!" said Ratcliffe. "But are you sure you don't mind?"

"Mind! Why should I mind?"

"One portmanteau full of stuff will do me," said Ratcliffe, "and I have nearly a hundred and fifty in ready money and a letter of credit on the Lyonnaise at Havana for five hundred. I'll trundle my stuff over if you'll lend me a boat, and be back for luncheon. You'll be off this evening, I suppose, and I can stay aboard here till you get the anchor up. It's possible I might pick you up at Havana on the way back; but don't worry about that. Of course all this depends on whether that fellow will take me. I'll take the portmanteau with me and ask."

He did not in the least see what was going on in Skelton's mind.

"You will take your things with you in a boat, and if this—gentleman refuses to take you, what then?"

"I'll come back."

"Now I want to be quite clear with you, Ratcliffe," said Skelton. "If you leave my ship like that—for noth-

ing—at a whim and for disreputable chance acquaintances—absolute scow-bankers—the worst sort—I want to be clear with you—quite, absolutely definite—I must ask you not to come back!”

“Well, I’m hanged!” said Ratcliffe, suddenly blazing out. “First you say go and then you say don’t! Of course that’s enough: you’ve practically fired me off your boat.”

“Do not twist my words,” said the other. “That is a subtle form of prevarication I can’t stand.”

“I think we had better stop this,” said Ratcliffe. “I’m going! If I don’t see you again, I’ll say goodby.”

“And please understand,” said the other, who was rather white about the mouth, “please understand—”

“Oh, I know,” said Ratcliffe. “Goodby!”

He dived below to the saloon and rang for his bedroom steward.

Burning with anger and irritation and a feeling that he had been sat upon by Skelton, snubbed, sneered at, and altogether outrageously used, he could not trust himself to do his own packing. He sat on his bunkside while the steward stuffed a portmanteau with necessaries, and as he sat the thought came to him of what would happen were Tyler to refuse to take him. He would have to take refuge on Palm Island. It was a comic opera sort of idea; yet, such was the state of his mind, he actually entertained it.

Skelton was no longer “Skelly,” but “that beast Skelton.” Then he tipped the steward and the chief steward, telling them that he was going for a cruise in that “yaw!”

over there." On deck he met Norton and Simmons and told them the same tale. Skelton had vanished to his cabin. He told the first and second officers that he had said goodby to his host and asked for a boat to be lowered.

"I'll pick you up most likely at Havana," said he to gloze the matter over. "I expect I'll have a good time, but rather rough. I want to do some fishing."

The whole thing seemed like a dream and not a particularly pleasant one. Embarked on this business now, he almost wished himself done with it. The yacht was comfortable, the cooking splendid; to satisfy any want, one had only to touch a bell. There were no bells on board the *Sarah Tyler*. A lavatory and a sort of bathroom invented by "Pap" were the only conveniences, and the bath was impracticable. It was "Pap's" only failure, for the sea-cock connecting it with the outer ocean was so arranged or constituted that as likely as not it would let in the Caribbean before you could "stop it off."

If Skelton now, at the last moment, had asked Ratcliffe to come down and have an interview, things might have been smoothed over, but Skelton was not the sort of man to make advances; neither, in his way, was Ratcliffe.

Meanwhile, Simmons was directing the lowering of a boat. The companionway was still down. The luggage was put in, and Simmons, seated by Ratcliffe in the stern seats, took the yoke lines. Not a sign of Skelton, not even a face at a porthole!

"Give way!" shouted Simmons.

As they drew up to the *Sarah Tyler*, Ratcliffe saw Satan leaning over the rail and watching them. Jude was nowhere visible.

"Hullo!" said Ratcliffe as they came alongside. "I've come back."

"I was half-expectia' you," said Satan with a grin.

"Will you take me for that cruise right off?"

"Sure! That your dunnage?"

"Yes."

Satan stepped to the cabin companionway and shouted down it.

"Jude!"

"Hullo!" came Jude's voice.

"He's come back!"

CHAPTER V

THE PORTMANTEAU

AS Jude came on deck the portmanteau was being hoisted on board. Ratcliffe passed down a five-pound note to the boat's crew, and then stood, waving to Simmons as the boat put away. Then, turning to Satan, he tried to discuss terms, but was instantly silenced by Jude and Satan. They would hear nothing of money. Used to sea changes and strange happenings, they seemed to think nothing of the business, and after the first words fell to talking together.

The trend of their talk induced in Ratcliffe a vaguely uncanny feeling. It was as though they had already discussed his coming on board and the storage of himself and his baggage, as though they had known by instinct that he would return. The size of the portmanteau affected Jude.

"You can't keep that," said Jude, giving the portmanteau a slight kick. "It's a long sight too big. Say, what have you got in it?"

"Clothes."

"Pajamas?"

"Yes, and lots of other things."

Jude tilted back the old panama she was wearing and

took her seat on the portmanteau. Her feet were bare, and she twisted her toes in thought as she sat for a moment turning matters over in her mind.

"You can stick the things in the spare locker," said she at last. "You gonna have a gay old time if you keep this in the cabin, tumblin' over it. Better empty her here an' cart the stuff below."

"Right!" said Ratcliffe. "But what shall I do with the portmanteau when it's empty?"

"Heave her overboard," said Jude.

"Shut your head!" said Tyler, suddenly cutting in. "What you talkin' about? Heave yourself overboard!" Then to Ratcliffe, "She's right, all the same; there's no room for luggage. If you'll help Jude to get the things below, I'll look after the trunk. When you've done with the cruise you can get a bag to hold your things."

Ratcliffe opened the portmanteau. The steward of the *Dryad* was an expert: in a past existence he had probably been a pack rat. In any given space he could have tucked away half as much again as any other ordinary mortal. But he certainly had no imagination, or perhaps he had been too busy to cast his eye overboard and see the manner of craft Ratcliffe was joining, and Ratcliffe had been far too much exercised in his mind about Skelton to notice what was being packed.

Jude on her knees helped.

"What's this?" asked Jude, coming on a black satin lining.

"Confound the fool!" said Ratcliffe. "He needn't have packed that: it's a dinner jacket."

"Mean to say you sit down to your dinner in a jacket?" Jude choked and snorted while Ratcliffe hurriedly, on his knees, hauled out the trousers and waistcoats that went with the garments.

"That's the lining—it's worn the other way about—I know it's tomfoolery. Stick 'em all in one bundle—Lord! look at the shirts he's packed!"

"They've got tucks in them," said Jude, looking at the pleated fronts.

"I know. They go with that tomfool dinner suit. You can't knock sense into the head of a bedroom steward. Come along and let's get them down below."

While they were carting the stuff down, Satan on the hatch cover cut himself a chew of tobacco (he sometimes chewed) and, with his lantern jaws working regularly like the jaws of a cow chewing the cud, contemplated the steadily emptying portmanteau.

He had a plan about that portmanteau, a plan to turn it to profit. Satan's plans generally had profit for their object. He had taken a genuine liking for Ratcliffe; but it was a curious thing with Satan that even his likings generally helped him along toward profit,—perhaps because they were the outcome of a keen intelligence that had been sharpened by knocking about among rascals, beachcombers, wharf rats, as well as honest folk.

When Ratcliffe had fetched down the last load and come up again, he found Satan and the portmanteau gone.

The canvas boat had not been brought on board, but streamed astern on a line. He looked over the side.

Satan was in the boat with the portmanteau and in the act of pushing off.

"I'm takin' her back to the yacht," said Satan.

Ratcliffe nodded.

At that moment Jude came on deck blinking and hitching up her trousers. She had washed her face and made herself a bit more tidy,—perhaps because she had remembered it was Sunday or perhaps because company had come on board. She had evidently put her whole head into the water. It was dripping, and as she stood with the old panama in her hand and her cropped hair drying in the sun Ratcliffe observed her anew and thought that he had never seen a more likable figure. Jude would never be pretty, but she was better than pretty,—healthy, honest and capable, trusting and fearless, easily reflecting laughter, and with a trace of the irresponsibility of youth. It was a face entirely original and distinctive. Dirty, it was the face of a larrikin; washed, a face such as I have attempted to describe; and the eyes were extraordinary,—liquid-gray, with a look of distance, when she was serious, a look acquired perhaps from life among vast sea spaces.

"Where's Satan?" asked Jude.

Ratcliffe pointed.

Jude, shading her eyes, looked. Then she laughed.

"Thought he was up to somethin'," said she. "He's gone to kid that officer man out of some more truck."

In a flash Ratcliffe saw the reason of Satan's activities, and in another flash he saw again, or seemed to see, in Satan and Jude a pair of gipsies of the sea. A gipsies'

caravan camped close to a neat villa,—that was the relationship between the *Sarah Tyler* and the *Dryad*,—and Satan was the caravan man gone round to the villa's back door to return an empty portmanteau and blarney the servants out of scraps and old odds and ends not wanted, maybe to commandeer a chicken or nick a doormat—heaven only knew! He remembered the fancy Satan had taken to the dinghy. And he, Ratcliffe, had thrown in his lot with these people! Fishing cruise! Rubbish! Gipsy patter, sea thimblerrigging, wreck-picking, and maybe petty larceny from Guadaloupe to dry Tortugas,—that was what he had signed on for. Why, the *Sarah Tyler*, could she have been hauled into any law court, would have stood convicted on her very appearance! Jude was honest enough in her way; but her way was Satan's way, and she had owned up with steadfast, honest eyes to the plundering of a brig and the caching of the plunder. They were "passons to what Pap had been," but they were his offspring, and the law to them was no doubt what it had been to him,—a something to be avoided or outwitted, like a dangerous animal.

All these thoughts running through his head did not disturb him in the least. Far from that! The reckless in him had expanded since he had cut the cable connecting him with the *Dryad*, and not for worlds would he have changed the *Sarah* into a vessel of more conventional form, or altered Satan from whatever he might be into a figure of definite respectability.

He reckoned that if Satan broke the law he would be clever enough to avoid the consequences. His tongue

alone would get him out of most fixes, and just this touch of gipsiness in the business gave a new flavor to life,—the flavor boys seek when they raid orchards and hen-roosts and go pirating with corked faces and lath swords.

"He's goin' aboard her," said Jude.

The portmanteau had been taken up by one of the crew, and now Satan, evidently at the invitation of one of the white-clad figures leaning over the rail of the *Dryad*, was going up the accommodation ladder, leaving the boat to wash about in the blue water by the stage.

Ratcliffe guessed that one of the white-clad figures was Skelton and that it was on Skelton's invitation he had gone on board. He felt vaguely uneasy. What did Skelton mean by that? Was he up to any dodge to "crab" the cruise?

However, he had no time to bother over this, for Jude, who had him now to herself without fear of interruption, had opened her batteries.

"Say," said Jude, hanging over the rail where the awning cast its shadow, speaking without looking at him and spitting into the water, "what are you when you're ashore, anyway?"

"I'm one of the idle rich," said Ratcliffe, lighting his pipe.

"Well, you won't be idle aboard here," said Jude definitely. "What was your dad? Was your dad an idle-rich?"

"No, he was a ship owner."

"How many ships did he own?"

"About forty."

"What sort?"

"Steamers."

"What sizes?"

"Oh, anything from two to five thousand tons."

She turned to see if he were guying her.

"There was another man in the business," said Ratcliffe, "a partner; Ratcliffe & Holt was the name of the firm. The governor died intestate."

"Somethin' wrong with his inside?"

"No, he died of a stroke; he was found in his office chair dead; he died at his work."

"Did they get the chap that did him in?" asked Jude.

"No, it wasn't a man that struck him; it was apoplexy, a disease, and dying without a will, all his money was divided up between my two brothers and me."

"How much did you get?"

"Over a hundred thousand."

"Dollars?"

"No, pounds—four hundred thousand dollars."

"Got 'em still?"

"Yes."

"In the bank?"

"Some; the rest is invested."

She seemed to lose interest in the money business and hung for a moment over the rail, whistling almost noiselessly between her teeth and kicking up a bare heel. Then she said:

"Who's the chap you were sailin' with?"

"Skelton is his name."

"He owns that hooker?"

"Yes."

"Well," said Jude suddenly, as if waking from a reverie, "this won't boil potatoes—I've got to get dinner ready. Come 'long and help if you're willin'."

There was half a sack of potatoes in the galley. She set the stove going, and then, on her knees before the open sack, she sent him to fetch half a bucket of water from overboard. He found the bucket with a rope attached, brought the water, and filled the potato kettle, then he brought more water for the washing of the potatoes.

She did the washing squatting on her heels before the bucket.

"Where did you get them from?" asked Ratcliffe.

"Get which?"

"The potatoes."

"Bought them," said Jude; then, as though suddenly smitten by rectitude, "No, we didn't, nuther: we kidooled them out of a fruiter."

"What's a fruiter?"

"Fruit steamer. Satan fixed her."

"How did he fix her?"

"Well," said Jude, "it's no harm to hold up a packet if you don't throw her off her course—much. It's the owners pays, and they can stand the racket. The crew likes it, and if there's passengers aboard they just love it."

"Do you mean to say you hold up steamers?" asked Ratcliffe.

"Yep."

"But how do you do it?"

"Oh, it's only now and then. What's easier than to lay in her course with the flag half-mast? Then she heaves to."

"And you board her and ask for potatoes, or whatever you want?"

"Not much!" said Jude. "They'd boot you off the ship. Water's what you ask for, pretendin' you're dying of thirst; then you drink till you're near bustin' and fill the breaker you've brought with you. It's all on the square. Satan would never hold a ship unless he had some fish to offer them for whatever he wants,—potatoes or fruit or tobacco. He's got the fish in the boat and hands it up. They're always glad of fresh fish and they offer to buy it; but he won't take money, but says, 'If you've got a few potatoes handy, I don't mind takin' them for the fish.' Sometimes it's fruit he wants, or other things. Then you push off—and if it's a passenger packet the passengers, thinkin' they've saved you from dyin' of thirst, line up and cheer. It's no end of fun."

"What flag do you sail under?"

"'Murrican, what else? You see," went on Jude as she put the potatoes into the kettle, "fish costs nothing to us and they're mighty glad of it, but I reckon they'd bat our heads off if they knew about the dyin' of thirst business."

"But suppose you struck the same ship twice?"

"It's not a job one does every day," said Jude, with a trace of contempt in her tone, "and Satan don't wear blinkers, and it's not a job you could do at all if you

didn't know the lie of the fishin' banks by where the ship tracks run. I reckon you've got to learn something about things."

"I reckon I have," said Ratcliffe, laughing, "and I bet you'll teach me!"

"Well, shy that over to begin with," said Jude, giving him the pail of dirty water.

He flung the water over the side, and as he did so he took a glance at the *Dryad*. Satan was in the boat just pushing off. When he returned to the galley with the news, Jude was preparing to fry fish: not the early morning fish, but some caught just before Ratcliffe had come on board.

Then he went to the rail again just as Satan was coming alongside.

Satan had a cargo of sorts. His insatiable appetite for canvas and rope was evidenced by the bundle in the stern, and there were parcels. The return of the empty portmanteau had not been waste labor.

"That's coffee," said he to Ratcliffe, handing up the goods. "We were runnin' short. And here's biscuits—catch a holt—and here's some fancy muck in cans and c'ndensed milk—I told the chap our cow died yesterday. 'Take everything you want,' says he. 'Don't mind me—I'm only the owner.' Offered me the mainsail as I was puttin' off an' told me to come back for the dinghy. I'd told him I was sweet on her—full of fun he was—and maybe I will. Claw hold of this bundle of matches—they're a livin' Godsend—and here's a case of canned t'marters—and that's all."

Skelton's irony was evidently quite lost on Satan, or put down to his "fun," but Ratcliffe could appreciate it, and the fact that its real target was himself.

The canned t'marters appeared with the food at dinner, and during the meal more of Skelton came out. He had offered Satan vinous liquors, hoping, so Ratcliffe dimly suspected, to send him back a trouble to the *Sarah Tyler* and an object lesson on the keeping of disreputable company; but the wily Satan had no use for liquor. He was on the water wagon.

"I leave all them sorts of things to Jude," said he, with a grin. He was referring to Jude's boasted drunk at Havana, and Ratcliffe, who was placed opposite to the pair of them, across the table, saw Jude's chin project. Why she should boast of a thing one moment and fire up at the mention of it at another was beyond him.

For a moment it seemed as if she were going to empty the dish of tomatoes over Satan, but she held herself in, all but her tongue.

"You'd hâve been doin' better work on board here, mîndin' the gooseneck of that spare gaff, than wangling old canvas an' rope out of that man," said she. "We're full up of old truck that's no more use to us than Solomon's aunt. It's in the family, I suppose, seein' what Granf'er was—"

"Oh, put a potato in your mouth!" said Satan.

"He used to peddle truck on the Canada border," said she to Ratcliffe,— "hams—"

"Close up!" said Satan.

"—made out o' birchwood, and wooden nutmegs—"

"That was Pap's joke," said Satan. "And another word out of you and I'll turn you over me knee and take down your—"

"Then what do you want flingin' old things in my face?" cried Jude, wobbling between anger and tears. "Some day I'll take me hook, same as mother did."

"There's not a Baptis' minister would look at you," said Satan, winking at Ratcliffe.

"Damn Baptis' ministers! You may work your old hooker yourself. I'll skip! Two thousand of them dollars is mine, and next time we touch Havana I'll skip!"

"And where'll you skip to?"

"I'll start a la'ndry."

"Then you'll have to black your face and wear a turban, same as the others—and marry a nigger. I can see you comin' off for the ship's washin'."

Jude began to laugh in a crazy sort of way, then all at once she sobered down and went on with her dinner. One could never tell how her anger would end,—in tears, laughter of a wild sort, or just nothing.

Not another word was said about the family history of the Tylers, at least at that meal, and after it was over Jude made Ratcliffe help to wash up the plates and things in the galley.

"Satan's Cap," said Jude. "He never helps in the washin' or swillin'. Not cold water!—land's sake! where did you learn washin' up?—hot! I've left some in that billy on the stove."

She had taken off her old coat and rolled her guernsey sleeves up to the shoulders nearly, and it came to Rat-

cliffe as he helped that, without a word of remonstrance, naturally, and as a part adapts itself to the economy of a whole, he had sunk into the position of kitchen maid and general help to the Tyler family, taken the place of the nigger that had skipped; furthermore that Satan was less a person than a subtle influence. Satan seemed to obtain his ends more by wishing than by willing. He wanted an extra hand, and he had somehow put the spell of his wish on him, Ratcliffe. He had wished a drum of paint out of Simmons—and look at Skelton, the cynical and superior Skelton, sending off doles of coffee and “t’marters” to the dingy and disreputable *Sarah Tyler*, offering his mainsail to the rapacious Satan as a gibe! What had he been but a marionette dancing on the string of Satan’s wish?

Only for Jude and the *Sarah* and the queer new sense of freedom from all the associations he had ever known, only for something likable about Satan, the something that gave him power to wheedle things out of people and bend them to his wishes, Ratcliffe might have reacted against the Tyler hypnotism. As it was, the whole business seemed as jolly as a pantomime, as exciting as a new form of novel in which the folk were real and himself a character.

Leaving Satan and the old *Sarah* aside, and the extraordinary fascination of spars, sails, narrow deck, and close sea, catching one’s own fish, cooking one’s own food, and dickering with winds, waves, reefs, and lee shores for a living,—leaving all these aside, Jude alone would have held him; for Jude gave him what he pos-

sessed when he was nine,—the power of playing again, of seeing everything new and fresh. Washing up dishes with Jude was a game. To the whole-souled Jude all this business was a game,—hauling on the halyards, fishing, cooking, hanging on to the beard of a storm by the sea anchor, wreck picking and so on,—and she had infected him. Already they were good companions and, when together, of the same age, about nine—though she was fifteen and he over twenty.

“Stick them on that shelf,” said Jude. “Oh, Lord!—butter-fingers!—lemme! That’s the gadget to keep them from shiftin’ if the ship rolls. Now stick the knives in that locker. You don’t mind my tellin’ you, do you?”

“Not a bit.”

“Well, that’s all.”

They found Satan under the awning, attending to the gooseneck of the spare gaff.

Jude sat down on the deck clasping her knees, criticized Satan’s handiwork, received instructions to hold her tongue, and then collapsed, lying on her back with knees up and the back of her hand across her eyes. She could sleep at any odd moment.

The horizon had vanished in haze, the crying of the gulls had died down, and the washing of the lazy swell on the island beach sounded like a lullaby.

A trace of smoke was rising from the yellow funnel of the *Dryad* as she lay like a white painted ship on a blue painted ocean. They were firing up.

“How about getting ashore?” asked Ratcliffe. “I want to see that cache of yours. Care to come?”

"I'd just as soon leave it till they're away," said Satan, jerking his hand toward the *Dryad*. "There's no tellin', they might be spottin' us on the location with a glass, and they'll be off tonight—so the chap told me. You leave it to me and I'll show you a cache better nor that in a day or two."

"Shut up, Satan!" came a drowsy voice from the deck.

"Shut up yourself!" said Satan. "I'm not talkin' of what you mean: I'm talkin' of the abalone reef—lyin' there like a lazy dog and lippin' your betters!"

"Where's me betters?" cried Jude, sitting bang-up suddenly, like the corpse in "Thou art the man."

"I'm your betters."

"You!"

"Me!"

Jude broke into a cracked laugh.

"Listen to him talkin'!" cried she to the universe in general. "Ain't fit to bile potatoes!" She was on her feet, and he was after her with a rope's end, dodging her round the mast. "Touch me and I'll tell him!" A flick of the rope's end caught her, and next moment she was clinging to Ratcliffe and using him as her shield. "It's an old ship sunk south o' Rum Key!" cried Jude. "South o' Rum Key! I told you I'd tell him if you touched me."

Satan dropped the rope and resumed the gooseneck business.

"Now you've done it!" said he.

"Told you I would," said Jude. She sat down on the

deck again as though nothing had happened and nursed her knees.

"You needn't mind me," said Ratcliffe. "I won't tell."

"Oh, it's not that," said Satan, "but Pap was mighty particular about keepin' close. He located that hooker only three months before the fever took him—and he didn't come on it by chance nuther. And now Jude's given the show away!"

"I told you I'd tell him," said Jude broodily.

"Told me you'd tell him! Why, ever since last fall you've been at me to keep my tongue in my head about it, and then you bring it out bing, first thing, yourself! That's a woman all over."

"Who are you callin' a woman?"

"Me aunt. Shut your head and give over handlin' that ball of yarn, clutch hold of the gaff and keep it steady while I fix this ring on her!"

He worked away in silence while Ratcliffe sat watching, vaguely intrigued by what had just passed. It was less the words than the place and circumstance,—the little deck of the *Sarah Tyler*, the blue lazy sea, the voice of the surf on Palm Island, the figure of Jude and Satan. He had seen Rum Cay: They had passed it in a pink and pearly dawn. The steward had called him up to look at it. South of that lonely and fascinating place old man Tyler had located a sunk ship. What sort of ship he knew instinctively and that the Tylers were not the people to halloo over nothing. The gulls did not know these seas better than they. He said nothing, however. It was Satan who spoke next.

"Pap had reckoned to lay for it this spring," said Satan, "but the fever took him. Then we were underhanded. Jude and me can make out to work the boat and get a livin', but we're too underhanded for a big job. Why, takin' that truck off the brig I told you about near laid us out, and we had the nigger to help and she was hove up so that it was like takin' cargo off a wharf-side."

"Look here," said Ratcliffe, "I'll help if you care to go for it. I don't want any share: just the fun. What's in her?"

"Well," said Satan in a half-hearted way, "maybe we'll have a look at her; but it's a job that wants more than three by rights. Pap was three men in himself; he'd a done it. It's a dynamite job. She's got to be blasted open."

"I've heard stories about buried treasure in these seas—" began Ratcliffe. Jude turned her head.

"That's bilge," said she.

"Yarns," said Satan. "Pap used to turn any man down that talked of stuff bein' buried. First he said that chaps didn't bury stuff, second if they did you couldn't find it, what with earthquakes and sand siftin' and such, and third that never an ounce of silver, or gold for the matter of that, has ever been dug up by the tomfools huntin' for it. Havana is full of tall stories of buried treasure—chaps make a livin' sellin' locations and faked charts and the like of that. It's a Spanish game, and it takes good American money every year. You see, Pap was a book-readin' man,—taught himself to read,

too, and didn't start the job till he was near forty,—so he had a head on him, but somehow or 'nother he never made the money he ought. If he'd stuck in towns and places, he'd have been a Rock'feller; but he liked beatin' about free, said God's good air was better than dollars. But it stuck in him that he hadn't made out, somehow. Then he turned into unbelievin' ways, said he was a soci—what was it, Jude?"

"Somethin' or 'nother," said Jude.

"Socialist?" suggested Ratcliffe.

"That's it! Said the time was coming when all the guys that were down under would be on top of the chaps that were on top, and that there'd be such a hell of a rough house money'd be no use anyway; said the time was comin' when eggs would be a dollar apiece and no dollars to buy them with, and me and Jude would be safest without money gettin' our livin' out of the sea. He was a proper dirge when he got on that tack. But all the same it stuck in him that he wasn't on top, and one night when he was in Diegos' saloon he heard three Spanish chaps layin' their heads together. He knew the lingo well enough to make out their meanin'. They were in the bar. Pap wasn't on the water wagon, but he was no boozier. He was sittin' there that night just dead beat, as any man might be after the day's work he'd done, runnin' the customs—"

"Luff!" said Jude in a warning voice.

"Oh, close your head! Think I am talkin' to a customs officer? He don't care."

"Not a bit," said Ratcliffe. "Heave ahead."

"Well, he was sittin' with his eyes shut, and he heard these guys colludin' together. He didn't get more than half they said, but he got enough to make him want to hear more. Then they quit the bar and went into a back room with their lemon juice and cigarettes. Ten minutes after hell broke loose in that back room, and when Pap and the bartender got the door open there was the chaps, one on the floor shot through the head and the other two near done in. Two of them had set on the guy that was dead; but they hadn't knocked him out before he began to shoot, and he'd pretty well riddled them with a Colt automatic pistol—"

"Them's the things!" said Jude. "I'm savin' up to buy one of them things on my own—twenty-five dollars—"

"Shut your head! Then they must have knocked it out of his hand and used the last shot on him."

"His brains were all over the floor," said Jude with relish. "Pap said they looked like white of egg beat up and enough to fill a puddin' basin."

"Pap spotted somethin' else on the floor," went on Satan, "a piece of paper folded double. He put it in his pocket while the fellers were bein' lifted to the hospital, where they died that same night. He was on the square all right, takin' that paper, and I'll tell you why. Six months before that we'd spotted a wreck comin' up from Guadaloupe. She's so placed—as maybe you'll see yourself one day—that a hundred ships might have passed her without spottin' her, and bein' out of trade

tracks made her all the safer. These guys had been talkin' about a wreck before they left the bar for the back room, and he reckoned it was our find they were onto. The piece of paper made him sure of that, and, takin' it with the talk he'd heard, he reckoned he had got the biggest thing that ever humped itself in these waters. He said there was a hundred thousand dollars aboard her."

It was a fascinating story, yet it seemed to Ratcliffe that Satan showed little enthusiasm over the business.

"You don't seem very keen about it," said he.

"Well," said Satan, "it seems a bit too big, and that's the truth. The hooker's there right enough, but I don't seem to see all that stuff aboard of her."

"It's there right enough," said Jude.

"Then there's the getting of it," went on Satan. "That's a tough job to tackle. Months of work, no pay, and the chance of bein' let down at the end of it."

"Satan'd sooner be grubbin' round after abalones," said Jude. "Bone lazy, that's what he is! I know the stuff's there, and I'm goin' to get it if I have to dig it out myself."

"Well, off with you then," said the other, "and a good riddance you'd be!" Then to Ratcliffe, "We'll run you down there some day and you can see for yourself. If you've any money to burn, you might like to put it in the spec'. We'd want extra help. Jude's talkin' through her hat. We can't tackle that business alone, even Pap saw that—though he was mighty set on doin' it single-

handed. And that's where the bother comes in, for the island where she's lyin' is Spanish, and the Dagoes would claim what we got if they knew."

"We'd have to get half a dozen men and give them a share," said Ratcliffe. "That would make them hold their tongues; but I see an awful lot of difficulties. Suppose you got the stuff, how are you to get rid of it?"

"We'd have to get it down to a Brazil port," said Satan, "or run it into Caracas. That's handier. Them Venezuelans are the handiest chaps when it comes to loose dealin'."

"For the matter of that," said Ratcliffe, "one could run it straight to England. There are lots of places there where we could get it ashore—but we've got to get it first."

"That's so," said Satan. "Look! She's puttin' a boat off." He pointed to the *Dryad*.

A quarter-boat had been lowered and was pulling away from the yacht. As she drew closer Ratcliffe saw that the man in the stern sheets, steering, was Skelton,—Skelton coming either to make trouble or to make friends.

The oars rose up and fell with a crash as the bow oar hooked on to the dingy old *Sarah*.

"Hullo!" said Ratcliffe.

"Hullo!" said Skelton.

"Won't you come on board?"

"No, thank you." A sniff from Jude. "I just came over to say that we are starting."

Ratcliffe saw that he wanted to say a lot, but was tongue-tied before the boat's crew and the Tylers.

"Better come on board," said he, "and have a chat in the cabin before you're off."

Skelton hesitated a moment, then he came. He gave Satan a nod, utterly ignored Jude, and, followed by Ratcliffe, passed below. Downstairs his manner changed. Standing and refusing a seat, as though fearing to contaminate his lily-white ducks, he began to speak as if addressing the portrait of old man Tyler.

"I can't believe you absolutely mean to do this," said he. "I can understand a moment's temper, but—but—this is a joke carried too far."

"My dear Skelton," said the other, "what's the good? I have the greatest respect for you, but we are dead opposites in temperament and we make each other unhappy. What's the good of carrying it on? It's not as if you minded being alone. You like being alone, and I like this old tub and her crew. Well, let's each carry out our likings. I'm as happy as anything here."

"I'm not thinking of your happiness, but of the position. You were a guest on my yacht, and you leave me like this—I need not embroider on the bare fact."

"Do you want me to go back?"

"Not in the least," said Skelton. "You are a free agent, I hope."

Ratcliffe's blood was beginning to rise in temperature. He knew quite well Skelton wanted him to go back, but was too proud to say so, and he knew quite well that Skelton wanted him back, not for any love of him, but simply because the *position* was irregular and people, if

they heard of all this, might talk; also it might seem queer to the yacht's crew.

"Well, then, if you don't specially want me back, I'll stay," said he.

"Very well," said Skelton, "as you please. I wash my hands of the affair, and if you come to grief it is your own lookout. I will have the remainder of your baggage forwarded home to you when I reach England."

"I'll maybe see you at Havana when this cruise is over," said Ratcliffe vaguely.

"I doubt it," said Skelton. "It is quite possible I may not call there. He turned and began to climb the companionway. On deck he nodded frigidly to Satan and got over the side.

Satan, leaning across the rail, looked down.

"How about that mains'l?" asked Satan jocularly.

"I'm afraid I have no more spare canvas available," said Skelton, with a veiled dig at the rapacity of the lantern-jawed one, "or provisions. Anything else I shall be delighted to let you have."

"Well, then," said Satan, "you might send us a loan of the dinghy. We're short of boats."

"You shall have her," said Skelton with a glance at Ratcliffe, who was also leaning over, as though to say, "This is the sort of man you have thrown your lot in with!"

The boat pushed off.

"Goodby!" cried Ratcliffe, half laughing, half angry, with Satan, but quite unable to veto the promised gift.

"By," replied the other, raising a hand.

Jude, who had said not one word, suddenly began to giggle.

"What's wrong with you?" asked Satan.

"I dunno," replied Jude, "but there's somethin' about that guy that makes me want to laugh."

CHAPTER VI

SKELTON SAILS

THE breeze had risen with the declining sun and the water round the *Dryad* looked like a spread of smashed sapphires.

They watched Skelton getting on board, and then they saw the dinghy lowered and the quarter-boat taking her in tow. In five minutes, like a white duckling behind a moor-hen, she was streaming on a line behind the *Sarah* and the quarter-boat was pulling back for the yacht.

Satan had got his wish, and Ratcliffe was feeling just as Skelton wanted him to feel, under a compliment and rather a beast. Then they saw the boat taken on board and the hands laying aloft and the canvas shaking out to the favoring breeze.

"He'll have the wind right aft, and that'll save his coal," said Satan. "I reckon if his engines give out he wouldn't bother much, with all that canvas to carry him."

▼ "They're handlin' it smart," said Jude. "There's the anchor goin' up."

The flurried sound of the steam winch raising the anchor came across the water, then it ceased, and Jude, running to the flag locker, fetched out a dingy old Ameri-

can flag, bent it on, and ran it up, dipping it as the *Dryad* began to move.

She returned the compliment, gliding away with the bow wash beginning to show and the wake creaming behind her. As she passed the southern reefs and shifted her helm, squaring her yards to the following wind, a blast from her siren raised a blanket of shouting gulls. Then the island cut her off and the sea lay desolate.

The sense of his loneliness came on Ratcliffe, sudden as the clap of a door. He had cut the painter with civilization. The deck of the *Sarah Tyler* seemed smaller than ever, Jude and Satan more irresponsible and unaccountable, and his own daring a new thing, somewhat dubious. He had renounced services and delicacies and surety of passage and safety, letters and newspapers, everything he had known! The shock scarcely lasted a minute, and then, with the breeze across the pansy-blue evening sea, came blowing the wind of Adventure and Freedom.

Then in a moment some spirit explained to him what life really meant,—life as the Argonauts knew it, as the gulls know it, freedom in the intense and living moment, without a thought of yesterday, with scarcely a care for the morrow.

He took his seat in an old chair that Satan had placed under the rag of awning and lit his pipe. That delightful smoke seemed the culmination of everything in these first moments in this new world. As he smoked he watched the Tylers, who were so busy with their own affairs that they seemed to have forgotten him. They

had hauled the dinghy alongside, then they got into her and were lost to sight; but he could hear their voices, Jude's shrill with pleasure and excitement.

"My! Ain't she a beauty? Ain't she a dinky boat? My! look at the cushions!" A laugh. "For the love of Mike look at the cushions—cushions in a boat! Heave 'em on deck!" The cushions came flying over the rail, together with the voice of Satan, evidently bending.

"Leave them alone or I'll bat y' with the bailer! Well, let them lay on deck if they're there. She's a duck, new built too,—teak, copper fastenin's, all the best that money could buy. Stop rockin' her and over you get after the cushions."

Jude came clambering on board, beaming in the sunset, then she got one of the boat's cushions and took her seat on it on the deck beside Ratcliffe.

"I reckon old Popplecock's as soft as his cushions, to be wangled out of a boat like that," said Jude, examining the sole of her bare right foot for a fancied splinter. "Satan said he was goin' to try it on him when you were down below with him. Didn't believe he'd do it. That chap looked as stiff as his own mainmast—but there's no tellin'— Say, I heard what you said to him when you were down below."

"Oh, did you?"

"I wasn't listenin': I just heard through the skylight. I heard you sayin' you liked us and the old *Sarah* better'n him and his boat—what makes likin's?"

"I don't know."

"Nuther do I; but we took to you right off, same as you to us. Ever done abalone fishin'?"

"No."

"Well, I reckon you won't want to do it again, once you've tried. There'll be a big low tide tomorrow after sun-up, and you'll have a chance of seein' what it is. Finished your pipe? Well, come along and help us to get supper."

For all the work Ratcliffe did, she might have got the supper herself. He was mostly in the way; but it was the companionship that helped. Brothers aren't much good as companions. Ratcliffe was a new thing, absolutely new, from his striped pajamas and dandy clothes to his condition of mind, just as she was a new thing to Ratcliffe. Never did two beings come together so well or create more rapidly a little world of mutual interests out of the little things of life, or a weaker being dominate more completely the stronger.

"Can you make bread?" asked Jude after he had filled the tin kettle for her. "Well, you'll have to learn. That's the bakin' powder in that big tin, and the flour's in the starboard locker— What're you doin' with the tin? Land's sake! You don't think I'm goin' to make bread for supper, same as you make tea? Where was you born?"

"Hampshire."

"I thought it was somewhere like that," said Jude.

She instructed him in the primitive method of bread making as conducted on board the *Sarah Tyler*, finishing

up with the information that hardtack would be their portion at supper that night and breakfast next morning, as she was "up to the gunnel" in other business. Among the other things was having to put a patch on her trousers: not the ones she was wearing, which were her next best, but her worst. The old guernsey she was wearing was her second best. Coats! Oh, coats were good enough on Sunday or for going ashore in, but no use much in a ship, except an oilskin for dirty weather. Boots the same; stockings the same. You had to wear boots, of course, over rocks and through stuff like that over there on the island.

"Them pajamas" would be bully things to wear by day, only they'd frighten the fish. As for sleeping in such things, she'd just as soon seek the arms of Morpheus in a top hat. Why didn't he wear a nighty like her and Satan? Pap's eyes would have bugged out had he seen those things. He was "awful old fashioned,"—used to make her and Satan put cotton between their teeth every night. They did it still. She exhibited a set of dazzling white teeth to prove the fact. You just pulled a cotton thread between them, and then they never went rotten. Also he made them brush their teeth every morning. Folks that didn't do that got toothache.

"Kettle's boilin'," suddenly finished Jude. "Now start in an' let's see you make the tea—said you could do it. There's the can. Ain't you goin' to heat the pot first? How're you to heat it? Let me have a hold. Now fling the water out. A spoonful a head and one for the pot and another one for Satan,—he likes it strong,—and if

you'll take it along to the cabin without spillin' it I'll be after you in a minute with the plates and things."

Satan, who never put his hand to menial work, maintaining, without the least offense, his position as captain and owner, came down to supper, flushed with the good qualities of the dinghy. He had taken her for a row—and it was like hearing a man talking of a stroll with a sweetheart—if men ever talk of such things. Before going on deck to smoke he pointed out Ratcliffe's quarters for the night. He was to have Pap's cabin, the space divided off with a curtain. Jude and he always slept in hammocks swung in the "saloon." Before going on deck he fetched an old canister out of a locker and, emptying some dried herbs into a saucer, set fire to them and left them smoldering on the table. It was to keep the mosquitoes away. Pap had got the receipt from a Seminole Indian up near Cedar Cays. It was patent stuff. Not a mosquito would come when there was a sniff of it in the air.

Then, just as the moon was rising, and after the things were washed up, they sat on deck, smoking, listening to the waves on the beach, and watching fish jumping in the track of the moon. They talked of fish, and to Ratcliffe's mind two things became apparent,—Satan's profound, awful knowledge of the sea and all that lived therein, and his absolute indifference to sport. Satan fished for food. Tarpon and tarpon fishermen filled him with disgust and disdain. You can't eat tarpon, and the guys that came from New York and such places and spent their days fighting tarpon with a ten-ounce rod

and a twenty-one-thread line seemed to him bereft of reason.

Jude, sitting on the deck and mending her pants by the light of the moon, concurred.

"But it's the fun of the thing," said Ratcliffe; "it's the matching of one's skill and strength against the fish." He talked of the joys of salmon fishing.

"What bait do you use for them?" asked Satan.

"Flies."

Jude shrieked.

"Not live flies," he explained: "imitation ones." He tried to describe artificial fly-making and finished with a sense of failure as of one who had entered the lists in defense of a niggling form of business that had yet a touch of humor in it.

Then, as they talked, suddenly through the night came a sound like the boom of a big gun. Ratcliffe nearly dropped his pipe.

"That's a fish," said Satan.

"Sea bat," said Jude indifferently.

"That noise?"

"Sea bat jumping. There they go again. Must be a circus of them playin' about beyond the reefs,—big flat fish, weigh all of a ton."

"Tails as long as themselves and eyes like dinner plates," said Jude, "mushy brutes. Tow a ship after them if they foul the anchor—won't they, Satan?"

"They're loudenin'," said Satan. "They'll be comin' this way with the current. Come forward and have a look."

Leaning over the rail, they watched the moon-shot water. The sounds had ceased.

"They've stopped playin'," said Satan, as though he knew exactly what they were doing.

"It's too shallow for them here," said Jude.

"Shallow! It's fifty foot of water and a sandy bottom. What are you talkin' about? Told you."

The depths of the sea suddenly became lit. Down below vast forms came drifting like the mainsails of ships ablaze with phosphorescent light, drifting and turning over as they drifted like gargantuan leaves blown by the wind. The whiplike tails could be seen as streaks of flame. Glimpses of devilish faces and lambent eyes showed as they turned, the fins waving like frills of fire.

Then they were gone.

The Tylers showed little concern over the marvelous sight; allowing, however, that it was the biggest school of "bats" they had ever struck; but to Ratcliffe it was as though the sea had disclosed a peep of its true heart and real mystery.

Then they went to rest, and as he lay in Pap's cabin, listening to the occasional trickle of the water against the planking and the groan of the rudder moved by the lilt of the swell, it seemed to him that daring in its everyday and cold-blooded form could not have carried a man much further than it had carried him. The sea bats had underscored the business as far as the mystery of the ocean and danger of cruising in such a small boat were concerned; the hardness of Pap's bunk bedding told of

comforts renounced; while the morals of the Tylers, though good enough no doubt, had, as disclosed in their conversation, a touch of the free lance and a threat of port authority troubles and differences of opinion with the customs. Absolute respect for the rights of man, partial respect for the rights of shipping companies and steamer lines, no respect at all for governments and customs,—that was an outline of the Tyler morality. What had made him renounce the *Dryad* for the *Sarah*? What, lying in his hard bunk, made him contented with the exchange? The love of adventure and the craving for something new contributed, no doubt, but the main reason he felt to be the Tylers,—Satan with his strange mentality and queer methods; Jude, unlike any other being he had ever met.

Then, as he lay considering all this, came muted voices from the "saloon." Satan's voice:

"Have you put the cotton between your teeth?"

Then Jude's, drowsily:

"Naw—leave a body alone!"

"Get out o' your hammock, you lazy dog, an' fix your teeth or I'll let you down by the head!"

Then Jude's voice, dolorous and muffled, "Shut up or you'll be wakin' him! Cuss my teeth—cayn't find the cotton! Wakin' a body up like that! Tell you I'm *lookin'* for it—got it—"

A long silence, during which Ratcliffe dropped off, to be awakened an hour later by the lamentations of Jude and the sounds of Satan prodding her out of a nightmare,

—a gastric nightmare, in which it appeared to her troubled soul that she *had* to fry a sea bat, *totum terres atque rotundum*, in the small galley frying pan for breakfast.

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CHAPTER VII

CARQUINEZ

THE tide had begun to draw out with the setting stars, and the tune of the waters on the beach had sunk to the merest thread of sound.

Then, through the silence from the far reefs to southward, came the single, lamentable cry of a gull; then a chorus, and away against the vague blue of the east, here and there, like leaves blown about a dimly lit window showed the wings of the birds already putting out to sea for the fishing.

Ratcliffe was awakened by Jude calling on him to "show a leg."

"Satan's on deck," said Jude, "and if you believe in washin' he'll give you a swill with a bucket. Hurry up and come down again, for I want a swill myself. Swim? Not on your life! Sharks, that's why."

The voice came from a hammock which he had blundered against in the semidarkness. Then on deck after his swill, drying himself with an old towel provided by Satan, he stood for a moment watching the sun break up through the water and the great sea flashing to life and the white gulls flying.

The island was sending a faint breeze to them, a tepid breeze flavored with earth and cactus and bay cedar

scents, perfumes that mixed with the tang of the ocean and the tar-oakum scents of the *Sarah Tyler*.

And all these scents and sounds and sights, from the sun flash on the sea to the trembling palm fronds on the shore, seemed like a great bouquet presented by youth and morning.

Oh, the splendor of being alive, free, happy, without a single care, and the deck of the wandering *Sarah* under foot!

From below through the skylight came a sleep-heavy voice.

"Ain't you done yet?"

"Coming," said Ratcliffe.

He dived into his pajamas and came below.

"Get into your cabin an' shut the door," commanded the yawning voice from the hammock.

"There's no door."

"Well, draw the curtain. Oh, Lord! what's the good o' gettin' up? I'm near dead asleep!"

Then the voice of Satan descending the companion ladder.

"Ain't you up? Well, you wait one minute!"

A thump on the floor, a scurry up the companion ladder, and then shuddery lamentations and the sounds of swilling from the deck above, mixed with the admonitions of Satan from below.

"Oh, my! ain't it cold? Oh, my! ain't it frizzin'?"

"Get on, you mad turkle! You ain't washin', you're splashing the water on the deck. Slush it over you."

"I'm slushing it."

"Think I don't know? Why, you ain't gasped yet! Give a gasp, or I'll be up to you with a rope-end! That's more like it."

It was!

The sun was high when Ratcliffe got on deck, and a light, steady breeze was blowing up from the straits of Florida; the gulls looked like snowflakes blowing round the far reefs and against the morning blue of the sea.

Jude had put the kettle on. She had dressed on deck, having carried her "togs" with her, and she was now preparing a line for fishing, and, as she bent over it, appeared Satan,—Satan rising from the cabin hatch with a toothbrush in his hand.

"You've forgot your teeth," said Satan.

"No, I haven't," said Jude. "I've been fillin' the kettle—I'll fix them when I've done with the fishin'."

"Fishin' will wait." He fetched a pannikin of water. "You're more trouble than a dozen. What'd Pap say if he saw you?"

"I'll fix them when I've done with the fishin'."

"You'll fix them now!"

"No. I won't!"

Satan put down the pannikin and the brush. She evaded him like a flash and skimmed up the mast to the crosstrees.

Scarcely had she got up than she came sliding down, seized the toothbrush and pannikin, and began to brush her teeth over the scupper with a fire speed and fury that seemed born of dementia.

"Sardines comin'," explained Jude between mouthfuls. "Look alive and get a bucket!"

Ratcliffe looked over the sea, where her birdlike sight had spotted the sardine shoal being driven like a gray cloud under the water by pursuing fish. A fringe of dancing silver showed the leaping sardines, and the great fish driving the shoal broke up now and then in sword-flashes.

They were coming from south to north, and the left wing of the shoal would pass the island beach by a cable length.

While Satan stood by with a bucket at the end of a rope, Ratcliffe hung over the side watching.

The driven sardines had no eyes for the *Sarah*. They struck her like the blow of a great silvery hand, boiled around her, and passed. The army of pursuit followed, passed and vanished, leaving the water clear and Satan with a dipped up bucket full of quivering silver.

The Tylers, absolutely blind to the wonder of the business, fried the sardines just as they were, tossed out of the blue sea into the frying pan, and, breakfast over, Satan and Ratcliffe took the dinghy to hunt for abalones on the uncovered reef.

The reefs to southward formed two spurs divided by a creek of blue water, and having got the dinghy into this creek Ratcliffe tended the boat while Satan hunted for the abalones.

Satan in search of pearls was a sight. Heart, soul, and mind bound up in the business, like a dog hunting

for truffles, every find was announced by a yell or a whoop, like the whoop of a Red Indian.

Ratcliffe could see squiggly-wiggly cuttlefish tendrils running up Satan's arms as he dived in some of the rock-clefts, and Satan disengaging them and flinging the "mushy brutes" away. The big abalones were nearly always deep down under the rock ledges and had to be chiseled off, wallowing in the water. At these times Ratcliffe might have fancied the vanished one lost or drowned, but for the profane language that rose and floated away on the breeze.

All the same, it was dull work for the boat tender. Having nothing else to think of, he thought of Jude. Her figure chased away dullness.

A man in the bright and early morning is quite a different person from the same man at noon, and coming across Jude after a long course of Skelton was like stepping from a gray afternoon to dawn. Was it possible that Skelton and Jude were vertebrates of the same species?

Then there was what women would have called the pity of it. Ratcliffe did not deal much with the conventions as a rule; still, he could not but perceive that all life has an aim and ending, and that the end of an old sailor was not what life and the fitness of things had destined for Jude. What would she grow up into? He thought of all the girls he had ever known. There was not one so jolly as Jude; still, it was terrible, somehow, monstrous. He remembered her threat to pull her skirts over her head and run down the street if skirts were ever

imposed upon her. Her contempt for the feminine rose up before him, and against all that her housewifely instincts and the fact that, despite Satan's rope-end and mock bluster, she ruled the *Sarah Tyler* just as a woman rules a house.

Still, it was deplorable. Looking away into distance, what would become of her?

Vague and fatherly ideas of getting her away from this life and having her brought up properly and educated came to him, only to be dispelled by Jude. Imagine Jude in a girls' school, at a tea party!

He was aroused from these meditations by Satan,—Satan with an armful of abalones, Satan scratched and bleeding and soused in sea water, but triumphant.

He reckoned they were the biggest "fish" ever got on these reefs. There were a dozen and six all told, and when they were collected and put on board the dinghy put back.

Coming round the western spur of the reef, they found that Jude had left the *Sarah*—a high crime—and rowed herself ashore.

The canvas boat was on the beach, and away amid the bay cedars and cactus toward the trees could be seen the head and shoulders of the deserter moving about. She seemed in search of something.

"God love me!" cried Satan.

He beached the dinghy, helped Ratcliffe to run her up, and then started, followed by the other, running and shouting as he ran.

"Hi! chucklehead! Whatcha leave the ship for?"

Didn't I tell you to stand by her? Watcha huntin' for—turkles' eggs?"

"What you done with your eyes?" retorted the other. "Cayn't you see?"

Instantly, and by her tone and by some sixth sense, Satan was appeased. He seemed suddenly to scent danger. He saw the work she had been on, camouflaging the cache more effectively. He cast his glance over the island, the western sea, turned, and then stood stock-still, shading his eyes.

Away beyond the *Sarah Tyler* across the purple blue stood a sail. The land wind had died off, and the stranger was bringing the sea wind with her. A small topsail schooner she showed now, with all sail set, making dead for the island.

"That's him," said Satan.

"Spotted him half an hour ago," said Jude. "He was steering nor'-nor'west and shifted his helm when he saw us."

The bay cedar bushes sighed suddenly to the new-risen wind, and as Ratcliffe glanced about him the feeling of the desolation of the place where he stood came to him strong,—strong in the scent of cactus and herbage, the tune of the water on the beach, and the rustle of the wind in the bushes.

"He's been huntin' for us," said Satan, "curse him!"

"Who is he?" asked Ratcliffe.

"Friend of Pap's, he was—"

"Pretended to be," put in Jude.

"Spanish," continued Satan, "and ever since Pap gave

out he's been pretty much on our heels. Jude and me worked the thing out and we came to conclude he'd scented, somehow, from Pap, about the hooker I spoke of."

"The wreck?"

"Yep. Pap was keen on gettin' extra money into the business of salvin' her, and I b'lieve he sounded Carquinez,—that's his name,—and how much he let out takin' his soundin's the Lord only knows! Cark's in the tobacco line. Does a bit of everythin',—has a shop in the Calle Pedro in Havana and a gamblin' joint on the front, owns ships. That's one of them, and Matt Sellers runs her for him. He don't trouble handlin' her: sits in the cabin all day smokin' cigarettes."

"He's been after us ever since Pap died," said Jude, "on and off."

"It was one of his men got Jude in that doggerly down by the wharf and filled her up with rum," said Satan, turning the brim of his panama down. "Remember I told you—and what she let out the Lord only knows!"

"I didn't let out nothin'," said Jude; "only that we were goin' east this trip, I owns to that."

"Well, there's the result of your jaw," said Satan. "East was good enough for Cark: he'd hunt hell for a red cent. And don't you be sayin' you didn't let out nothin'. Why, I heard you jawin' about all the money you had when I come in and collared you! Cark believes Pap found that stuff and cached it—that's what he believes, or my name's not Tyler."

"Well, let's get aboard," said Jude. "If they see us

squatting about here, they'll maybe think the stuff's hid here."

"They've seen us by this, though it's too far for them to make out who we are," said Satan, pushing his panama farther forward to hide his face. He led the way to where the boats were on the sand, and they reëmbarked.

The abalones were got on board, and then they stood watching the approach of the stranger.

The white had gone out of her sails. Close in now, they showed dingy and patched. She had a low free-board. Then, as she dropped anchor and swung to her moorings broadside on to the *Sarah*, the rake of her masts became apparent, and her whole disreputableness spoke aloud.

Ratcliffe felt like a man who, having got into pleasant low company, suddenly finds himself drawn into unpleasant low company.

The *Tylers* and the old *Sarah* were all right, but this new crowd and that ratty old schooner he felt to be all wrong. And the newcomer somehow did not add honesty or moral stability to the appearance of the *Sarah*, nor did the half-disclosed character and activities of Cark shed luster on old man Tyler or his present representatives.

However, he had gone into this business open-eyed, and it was not for him to grumble at the friends or relationships of his hosts; besides he had trust in Satan and the wit of Satan to preserve them from the law.

Satan had covered the heap of abalones with some sail-cloth, and he was standing now working his lantern jaws on a bit of chewing gum, his eyes fixed on the stranger

as though she were made of glass and he could see Carquinez sitting smoking his cigarettes in the cabin.

"They haven't shown a sign," said Jude.

"They're bluffin' us to believe they haven't spotted who we are," said Satan. "Cark doesn't want us to twig he's been lookin' for us."

"Well," said Jude, "let's get the mud-hook up and put out right away. They won't have the face to chase us."

"Yes," said Satan, "and leave them to hunt the island and find the cache! They'd lift the stuff to the last tin of beef. They've seen us ashore among the bushes. You shouldn't have gone ashore."

"I went to see we hadn't left no traces."

"Traces be damned! Cark wants no traces. Once he starts to hunt, he'll turn the durned island upside down and shake it. He'll say to himself, 'What were they doin' here, anyway; what were they pokin' about them bushes for?' No, we've got to sit here till he goes, and that'll be this time next year, maybe."

"What's the name of his schooner?" asked Ratcliffe.

"The *Juan Bango*," replied Satan, "named after the tobacco company people. Look, they're gettin' a boat off. That's Sellers, and he's comin' aboard."

Then he collapsed, squatting under the bulwarks. "Guy them," said he to Jude. "Tell them I'm down with smallpox: that'll make them shove."

"Leave 'em to me," said Jude.

It was Matt Sellers right enough, a big wheezy man suggestive of Tammany Hall, but a sure-enough sailor in

practice. "The biggest blackguard on the coast" was his subsidiary title. He was the henchman of Carquinez. His career was not without interest and romance of a sort. It was he who had bought, with the money of Carquinez, the bones of the *Isidore*, wrecked against the sheer cliffs by the black strand of Martinique. Ten thousand dollars in gold coin she had on board her, and he salved them. That was a straight job, and a wonderful bit of work, taking it all together. It was a curiosity, too, because it was straight.

The crooked jobs of Matt Sellers would have filled a book.

Like old man Tyler, Sellers had no use for people who talked of buried treasure, he knew the Caribbean and the gulf too well.

If he was keen on the wreck business, then it was because he had excellent reasons for his keenness.

As the boat drew near, Ratcliffe noticed the villainous-looking crew, Spaniards, some of them with red handkerchiefs tied round their heads.

CHAPTER VIII

JUDE OVERDOES IT

“**H**ULLO, Kid!” cried Sellers as the boat came alongside the *Sarah*.

“Hullo, yourself,” replied Jude. “Where’ve you blown in from?”

“What’s become of Satan? Ain’t he aboard?” asked Sellers, ignoring the question.

“Satan’s dead,” said Jude.

“Satan’s which?”

“Died of the smallpox.”

“Well, I’m d—d!” said Sellers, casting his eyes over the *Sarah* and then resting them on Ratcliffe. “When was it?”

“A week ago.”

Sellers gave a word to the bow oar and the boat pushed off a bit, the fellows hanging on their oars.

“I thought I saw three of you on deck,” he shouted.

“The other chap’s gone below,” replied Jude.

The boat of the *Juan* hung for a moment as if in meditation. She made a striking picture, the blue water paling to green under her and the sun-blaze on the red topknots of the oarsmen.

Then without a word more she turned back to the *Juan*.

Satan in the scupper seemed preparing to have a fit. "What's the matter now?" asked Jude.

"What's the matter? What did you say I was dead for? Didn't I tell you to say I was down with small-pox?"

"Well, what's the difference?"

"Why, you mutt, wouldn't you have been snivelin' and cryin' if I was dead? And you handed that yarn out to him as ca'm as if you were talking of a tomcat! I didn't believe you myself."

"Why, I told him you was dead a week," cried Jude. "D'you think I'd be snivelin' and cryin' a week if you was dead? Lord! what you do think of yourself!"

Satan did not reply. He was thinking that he had made a false move and that Jude had put the cap on the business. Cark would be certain now that there was something hidden on the island.

Satan was on the horns of a dilemma. One horn was the cache of provisions containing a couple of thousand dollars' worth of stuff, the other horn was the old wreck that might contain nothing.

To hang on here was useless, for Cark would hang on too. Even if Cark went away, he would be sure to come back to hunt.

He sat with his back to the bulwarks, chewing and thinking. Then, heedless whether he was seen or not from the *Juan Bango*, he rose to his feet and leaned with his back against the rail. He had come to a decision.

Jude, watching him, said nothing, and Ratcliffe waited without a word. This little sea comedy interested him intensely, and all the more for its setting of loneliness and its background of blue sea and quarreling gulls.

It was to Ratcliffe that Satan spoke first.

"Look here!" said Satan. "You're standin' out of this, aren't you?"

"Which—the wreck business?"

"Yep. You're not keen upon puttin' money into it and havin' a share?"

"Oh, no. If you wanted me to, I'd be glad enough; but if you'd rather I stood out, I'll do so. I'm not keen about money, anyway; only I'd like to see the fun."

"You'll see fun enough," said Satan. "I'm goin' to drag Cark in. First of all, if I don't, he'll keep hangin' round here and sniff the cache; second, he'll work the job for us with his crew."

"He'll gobble every cent," said Jude.

"Which way?" asked Satan. "We'll give him half shares, and we'll split on him if he doesn't play fair. If we found stuff there, and once it was known, d'you think we'd be let keep it? We've got to get help, and isn't he as good as another? If there's no stuff there, he'll have all his work for nothing."

"The thing I can't make out," said Ratcliffe, "is the way he started out from Havana to find you. How did he ever expect to come across you?"

"Well, it's this way," said Satan. "Bein' in with Pap, he knew the lines we worked on; f'rinstance, he knew we worked this place for abalones. If he hadn't sighted

us here; he'd have tried Little Pine Island, which is lonelier than this place. You see he's got it in his noddle, as far as I can make out, that Pap lifted the stuff and cached it, and Pine Island or here would have been the likeliest places. He reckoned when we put out of Havana this time we were out to lift it for good. Well, he'll do the liftin' if it's to be done. Come on, I'm going over to see him right off. Jude, you stick here and clean up them abalones."

He got into the dinghy, followed by Ratcliffe, and they pushed off.

As they drew closer the *Juan Bango* showed up more distinctly for what she was.

One of the old schooners that used to run in the carrying trade between Havana and the Gulf ports, she had fallen from commercial honesty; anyhow in appearance, perhaps because Carquinez did not bother about appearance. You could not have damaged his paint if you had tried,—it was sun-blistered and gone green,—but his copper showed sharp and clear through the amazing brilliance of the water, without trace of weeds or barnacles.

Sellers was hanging over the rail as they came alongside.

If he felt surprise at this resurrection, he did not show it much.

"Hullo, Satan!" cried Sellers. "Thought you was dead."

"Cark on board?" asked Satan without wasting time on explanations.

"He's down below," said Sellers, accepting the attitude of the other. "Who's your friend?"

"Oh, just a gentleman that's come along for a cruise," said Satan. "So you've found me!"

"Seems so," said Sellers; "but tie up and come aboard."

Satan tied the painter to a channel plate and got over the side, followed by Ratcliffe.

The deck of the *Juan* sagged, and plank and dowel were indistinguishable one from the other by reason of dirt. Forward some of the crew were scraping a spare boom, and others collected round the foc'sle head were smoking cigarettes. The wind had died out into a warm breathing, setting aft and bringing with it a faint odor like the smell of acetylene. It was garlic.

From the foc'sle came the muffled thrumming of a guitar.

It was Ratcliffe's first experience with a Spaniard. He followed Satan, who followed Sellers down a steep companionway and then into a cabin where a great shaft of sunlight from the skylight above struck down through a haze of cigarette smoke.

The place was paneled with bird's-eye maple; the seats were upholstered in thick ribbed silk, worn and stained; the carpet was of the best, but threadbare in spots and burnt with cigar droppings; the metal fittings far too good for a trading schooner of the *Juan* type.

Everywhere lay evidence of splendor that had seen better days.

All these fittings had, in fact, been torn out of a yacht bought by Carquinez for an old song, and at the end of

the saloon table, going over some papers with a cigarette in his mouth, sat Carquinez himself, a figure to give one pause.

The whole of the left side of this gentleman's face was covered by a green patch. It was said that he had no left side to his face, that it had been eaten away by disease, and that, were he to unveil himself, the sight would frighten the beholder. However that may have been, what remained visible was enough to frighten any honest man with eyes to behold the nose of a vulture above the peaked chin of a money changer.

"Hullo, Cark!" said Satan.

"Come in," said Cark.

"Bring yourselves to an anchor," said Sellers, pointing out two of the fixed seats on each side of the table and taking another close to the owner of the *Juan*. "What'll you have?"

"Oh, I don't know," said Satan. "Something soft will suit us, and long."

Carquinez raised a bird-shrill voice:

"Antonio!"

"Si, Sigñor," came a response from outside, and on the voice a dusky form at the cabin door.

"Bring me two Zin and Zinzibeers for these two zentlemen, please."

"No gin!" cried Satan, Ratcliffe concurring. "Ginger beer will do."

"Zinzibeers," said Carquinez.

It was nearly all that he said at this interview, the trusty Sellers doing the talking.

Said Sellers to Satan, "Well, it's funny us hittin' on you like this, durned funny! We'd been down to Acklin looking up a location Cark was keen about, and comin' back I shifted the helm, seein' you lying here and not recognizin' the old *Sarah*. I thought it was Gundyman's boat."

Said Satan, taking up the drink just presented by Antonio, "Here's our respects to you both. Thought I was Gundyman; did you? Well, I spotted you on sight. Didn't want to see you neither. This gentleman will tell you I was squattin' in the scuppers while Jude was handing you that lie about the smallpox."

"Oh, was you?" said Sellers with an open and hearty laugh.

"I was so. Let's cut pretendin' and play on the square—are you willin'?"

"None better."

"Well, I'll put my cards out. You and Cark here have been after me pretty near since last fall; reason why, that wreck Pap told Cark of."

"W'ich was that?"

"I said let's cut pretendin' and play fair," said Satan sternly.

Cark wilted and raised his fingers in deprecation, and Sellers cut in.

"Yes, we'll play fair. There was talk of a wreck between your dad and us, and I'm not denying we had an eye after it. You see I'm open and honest with you. Heave ahead."

"I'm comin' to the point," said Satan, "and the point

is you and Cark between you have got it in your heads that you've only to follow me, find out where she's located, and claim shares for not tellin'."

"Heave ahead," said Sellers.

"Well, you've got it wrong," went on Satan. "You may follow me till the old *Juan* rots to pieces and you'll never know, not if I don't want you to know—got that clear?"

"Clear as day," said Sellers.

"Well, then, here's something else. If that wreck is what she's taken to be, it's more than one man's job to shift the boodle and bank it. I've got to have help, and if we can arrange a deal I'd just as soon have you two in the show as anyone else."

"Now you're talking," said Sellers.

Carquinez said nothing, but his hand shook, and Ratcliffe, watching him, received a shock. A wreath of cigarette smoke was stealing out from beneath the patch on his cheek! He wished the conference over and himself back on board the healthy *Sarah*. It came to him all at once that he had been drawn into a web of which Carquinez was the spider. Satan, too, and Jude had been drawn in. He could do nothing, however, at least for the moment, but watch and wait, and Satan's face was worth watching as that wily diplomatist sat facing Sellers.

"Not that I don't believe you'd kidoodle me over the business if you had a chance," continued Satan. "You would, sure; but you see I've got the weather gauge of you, knowing what I do of you, and that's more'n I'd have with strangers."

"Sure," said Sellers.

"Well, then," said Satan, "we've got that far, and it comes to terms. What's your share to be for helpin' to collar the stuff and dispose of it in Havana?"

"Two dollars out of every three that we make," said Sellers promptly. "There's the salving, you can't do that alone, or your dad would have done it prompt; then there's the cashing of it, you're lost men if you try that job on by yourselves. Why, there's not another man in Havana could do it only Cark, and even he couldn't bring the stuff into Havana Harbor! It'll have to be landed back of the island, north of Santiago. Lord knows what he'll have to pay!"

Satan cogitated for a moment.

"I'll meet you," said he at last. "I'm not set on big money. Anything more?"

"No, that's all," said Sellers.

Carquinez nodded approval, and lighting another cigarette leaned back in his chair.

"And what's this gentleman doing in the business?" asked Sellers, referring to Ratcliffe.

"Oh, he's standing out," said Satan. "He's just on a cruise with us."

"Yes, I'm standing out," said Ratcliffe. "I'm in it only for the fun of the thing, though I'm willing to help."

"Well, I reckon you'll have fun enough," said Sellers, "if we get foul of the customs, or if some other hooker comes poking along while we're salving. You're British, aren't you?"

"I am."

"I thought so. Come out for a spree?"

"You may put it like that."

"Did you by any chance come off a big white yacht that went west yesterday?"

"Yes, I did. What made you guess that?"

"Well," said Sellers, "it's easy to be seen you aren't one of us, and your clothes give you away. It's easy to be seen you haven't been dough-dishing long in the old *Sarah*. I didn't get your name."

"Ratcliffe."

"No trade or business?"

"None. My father was Ratcliffe the shipowner, Holt & Ratcliffe."

"Lord—love—a—duck!" said Sellers. "You're not wanting for money, I reckon. Well, this gets me, it do indeed! Holt & Ratcliffe—should think I *did* know them!"

"Antonio!" suddenly piped Carquinez.

"Si, Señor." Antonio appeared.

"Pedro Murias," said Carquinez.

Antonio vanished, and reappeared with a box of cigars, colossal cigars, worth twenty-five guineas a hundred in the London market. They were placed on the table and pushed toward Ratcliffe.

Satan grinned.

"Well," said he, "we've fixed things so far,—two out of every three dollars to you and no deductions."

"That's it," said Sellers.

"And now we've fixed terms," said Satan, "I want to know all about this hooker."

"Which was you meaning?" asked Sellers.

"The wreck."

"Listen to him!" cried Sellers. "Mean to say you don't know all about her?"

"N'more than Adam. I've heard from Pap she was called the *Nombre de Dios*, and was full of gold plate got from churches; but that's not much more than a name and a yarn. I've never banked much on the yarn. Seems too much of the New Jerusalem touch about it for me."

"Well, maybe you're wrong," said Sellers.

"Spit it out," said Satan. "Tell us what you know about her. You've got the contrac'; give us the news."

"Well, I'll tell you," said Sellers. "She weren't no ship with gold plates,—your dad got that wrong,—she was a big Spanish ship out of Vera Cruz making for Spain. She had a cargo of timber, some of them heavy foreign timbers that don't float. She'd got aboard her, besides the timber, more'n a million dollars' worth of gold,—Mexican gold most of it, Spanish coin some of it. Lopez was the name of the skipper, and he laid to bank that gold for himself. He'd been forty years in these seas and knew every key and sandbank same as the insides of his own pockets.

"Him and the mate were the only men in the know about that gold beside a supercargo by name of Perez.

"Well, he colluded together with them two guys to sink the hooker in six fathom water out of trade tracks, give out that she'd sunk in a gale, and come back in a year or two and collar the boodle. They had her bored

and plugged for the game, and when they got her to the location they pulled out the plugs, and she went down without a sneeze, natural as a dyin' Christian.

"They got the boats away in order, and the crew was got off to a man; but that crew never got ashore. Maybe it was something wrong with the grub or the water, there's no saying, but they never got ashore to turn witness. But the grub and water was all right in the dinghy. Them three guys had taken the dinghy, and they were picked up and landed somewhere on the gulf, fat and well."

All through Sellers' recitation Carquinez had sat nodding his head. He glanced now at Satan and Ratcliffe as if measuring its effect upon them, then he half closed his eyes again and retired into himself like a tortoise.

"They slung their yarn," went on Sellers, "and made all good, and it was only left for them to wait awhile and hire or steal a likely boat to pick up the stuff, when the yellow fever took the supercargo and the mate, leaving Lopez to fish for himself.

"He got back to Havana, which was his natural home, and there he put up with his son, who was a trader in tobacco, got a bit of a factory not bigger than a henh'us, and turned out a brand of cigars made out of leavin's and brown paper mostly.

"He put the son wise about the wreck; but he wouldn't give the location away till it was time to go and pick up the stuff, which wouldn't be for a year yet.

"Then he up and died, and the son started to hunt for the chart and couldn't find it. The old guy had given

him everything but the chart with the location marked on it. It wasn't a proper chart, neither: just a piece of paper with the thing done rough, but giving the bearings. And it was never found—not by the son. The grandson found it—and where do you think? Pasted into the lining of an old hat. That wasn't so long ago, neither, and what do you think that fool of a grandson did? Well, I'll tell you what he did. First of all he comes to Cark here, and tries to get him onto the job on a ten per cent basis, Cark to risk his money and reputation for a lousy ten per cent on what might be only the bones of an old ship. He let out her name and history and everything but the location.

"Cark wasn't having any on those terms,—was you, Cark?—and he told the chap to go to Medicine Hat and pick bilberries. The chap goes off, and what does he do but tries to get up a syndicate between himself and two yeggmen without a keel to their names! Perrira was the name of one, and da Silva was the name of the other, and they held a board meeting in Diego's saloon one night and shot holes in one another in the back parlor.

"Silva and Perrira had fixed it to lay the grandson out and collar the chart for themselves, and they'd have done it, only he wasn't backward with the shooting. Your dad was in the bar that night, and he twigged something from what they let drop before they went to the back parlor to hold their meeting. Then when the shooting began he was first into the room, and collared the chart, which was lying on the floor. He was always quick on the uptake, was your dad. Being a know-

ledgeable man, he reckoned Cark was the only chap in Havana to help him take the stuff and clear it. He knew the stuff was there by what he'd heard going on in the bar before the three chaps had left it for the back room, but before he could conclude business with Cark he up and died."

Cark nodded.

"That was so," said he.

"Well," said Satan, "we've got the whole yarn now, and I'm wishing to be done with the business. I'm pretty near sick of you two guys trailing after me, and I'll hand you out my belief for what it's worth. It don't seem natural to me to find gold in a hooker like that, just for the picking up, and I'd sell any man my chances for a thousand dollars. I've no knowledge of what's there. I'm just talkin' out of my head. You know what I am, I make my livin', and I'm content to run small. It's maybe that that puts me against big ventures. Anyhow, we've got to push this thing through, we've made the contrac'. I don't want it written down and signed, seein' that the law couldn't help me. I'm only sayin' that if you play me crooked I'll split. Got that in your heads?"

The high contracting parties on the other side nodded assent.

"That bein' settled," said Satan, "here's the chart."

He produced a metal tobacco box and took from it a folded piece of paper, which he laid on the table before Sellers.

The effect was magical.

Carquinez sprang from his chair like a young man,

came behind Sellers, and, bending over his shoulder, looked. Ratcliffe, though out of the business, was as excited as the others. Satan alone was calm.

He had been carrying the thing about so long that it had probably lost its freshness of interest.

Sellers, without speaking, stared at the chart before him.

Rum Cay was shown, and then, southwest of Rum Cay, a line of reef marked "Lone Reef," and in red ink, connected to the reef by a red line, the name "Nombre de Dios" could be made out, the "Dios" very indistinct at the frayed edge of the paper. In the top right-hand corner the latitude and longitude were written, but so faintly that it would have required close study in a strong light to make the figures out.

Nobody bothered about them. Lone Reef was on all the charts, and the name was enough.

"I've been by there," said Sellers at last, "and I've never seen signs of a wreck."

"You wouldn't," said Satan. "She lies flush with the coral in a crik between two arms of reef, not a stump of a mast on her. The hull of that reef must have raised itself since she was sunk, for the water in the crik doesn't cover her at high tide and low tides it's pretty near empty. But she's been under right enough, years ago, for the decks are coraled over, hatches and all, and the stuff's turned to iron cement with the sun and weather. We've got to dynamite her open."

"Sure," said Sellers; then, after a moment's pause. "It'll be a big job, if it's what you say. I had it in my

mind that she was a diving job in shallow water—never thought of the blasted coral.”

Carquinez said nothing. He withdrew to his seat at the end of the table and lit another cigarette. To Ratcliffe the silence of Carquinez approached the weird. The way Sellers, without consulting him, did all the talking seemed uncanny as though the pair were telepathic.

One thing certain was gradually being borne in upon him,—they were a most atrocious pair of rogues, and the marvel to him was the simplicity of Satan in having any dealings at all with them. They would surely swindle him, take what precautions he might. They would never give him a third share of any treasure. They would, most likely, murder him before he could split on them, if treasure were found. Of this Ratcliffe felt certain. He tried to telegraph a warning across the table, but Satan seemed blind to winks and frowns.

“Well, it’s there,” said Satan, “near a foot thick. You’ve got to drill it, and stick dynamite cartridges in the drill-holes and fire them. Got any dynamite aboard?”

“Not an ounce.”

“We might make out with blasting powder.”

“Yes, if we’d got it,” said Sellers. “There ain’t no use worrying, we’ve got to shin out of this back to Havana and get the explosives. Question is who’ll go for them, us or you?”

“Not me,” said Satan, “not if she was to lie there till the last trumpet. We’re underhanded, for one thing, and, f’r another, I’m gettin’ little enough out of the job as it stands without fetchin’ and carryin’ for you.”

"Then we'll go," said Sellers. "'Twon't take us more than a week to get there and back. Give us ten days, counting accidents, and we'll pick you up here."

"Why not at the reef?" asked Satan.

"Don't matter," said Sellers. "Here or there, it's all the same to us; ain't it, Cark?"

Cark nodded assent, and Satan, recapturing the chart, folded it up and put it back into the tobacco box.

"Right!" said he, placing the box into his pocket. "Here you'll find us."

CHAPTER IX

THE "JUAN" SAILS

THEY rose from the conference table, and Carquinez stood holding his coat together with a veined and knotted hand while the visitors were making their adieux.

"You haven't a few feet of galvanized wire aboard?" asked Satan as he passed out, following Sellers.

"Come on deck," said Sellers.

On deck he stood listening, while the other passed from galvanized wire to the question of spare ring-bolts and other trifles he stood desperately in need of. Like a hypnotized fowl in the hands of Satan, he made scarcely any resistance.

He had no ring-bolts, but the galvanized wire was forthcoming, also a little barrel for use as a buoy, some Burgundy pitch, an old paintbrush, a small can of turpentine, and a couple of pounds of twine.

A small boat-anchor that had raised Satan's desires brought the séance to a conclusion and broke the spell that seemed to lie on Sellers.

Blessed if Satan wouldn't be asking for his back teeth yet! What did he take the *Juan* for, a marine store? What would he want next, Carquinez?

They rowed off with the spoil, Sellers leaning on the

rail and lovingly pressing on them the acceptance of other trifles, including a guitar.

Alongside the *Sarah* they found Jude waiting to receive them. She had been cleaning up the abalones, was dissatisfied with the result,—quarter of a matchbox full of seed pearls,—and said so.

When her eye lighted on the stuff in the boat that Satan had wangled out of Sellers, she laughed in a dreary fashion.

"What you laughin' at?" demanded Satan.

"Nothing," said Jude.

She sat down on an upturned keg while they brought the truck on board. Then, nursing her knee and wiggling her bare toes to the warmth of the sun, she sat without a word, waiting for explanations.

It seemed to Ratcliffe all at once that a critic had come on the scene. He had forgotten Jude in relation to the deal over the wreck, and he was wondering now how she would take it. The female does not always see eye to eye with the male, as many a business man has discovered on revealing a transaction to the wife of his bosom.

Leaning against the rail, he filled his pipe and awaited the revelation with interest; but Satan, the revealer, seemed in no hurry for the business. He was bustling about disposing of the new-gotten "stores,"—the turpentine and pitch forward in the hole where paints were kept, the galvanized wire in a locker, and the little barrel behind the canvas boat.

Then he came aft again and, lighting a pipe, stood beside Ratcliffe.

"Well, what you been doing, anyway?" asked Jude, suddenly opening her batteries.

"Doing—which?" asked Satan. "Oh, you mean with Cark. Well, I've settled things with him, fixed it up so's he's goin' to help."

"Which way?" asked Jude.

"Why, to get the stuff, if it's there—what else? He's our only chance of doing the thing proper."

"What's he askin'?" said Jude.

"You mean terms?"

"Yep."

"Well, it's this way: He'll have to do the wreckin' business, and then if the stuff's got he'll have to run it ashore, and after that he'll have to get rid of it. I'm givin' him two dollars out of every three."

"Oh, Lord!" said Jude.

"What's the matter with you?"

"Why didn't you give him the lot?"

"Now look you here!" cried Satan. "I don't want no sass! Who's runnin' this show, you or me? How do you know what I've got up my sleeve? Have you ever known me done on a deal yet? Now you take my orders where Cark's concerned and take them smart, with no questions! If you don't—well, then, trade with him yourself, take charge of the *Sarah* and run her yourself! Lippin' your betters!"

Jude took off her old hat and looked into it as if for inspiration; then she clapped it on her head again, drew up both feet, clasped her arms round her knees, and sat

on the keg-top speechless and brooding, her eyes fixed on the *Juan*.

Satan turned and went below.

"Jude," said Ratcliffe.

"What you want?" said Jude, without shifting her gaze.

"Suppose you had all the money off that old wreck, if the money is there, what would you do with it?"

"What's the good of askin' me things like that?" said Jude. "I'd precious soon do something with it!"

"No, you wouldn't. You'd put it in the bank, and then your trouble would begin."

"Which way?"

"Well, you'd have it in the bank or invested and it would bring you in, say, twenty thousand dollars a year; well, you couldn't spend that on the dock-side, could you? You wouldn't be able to spend it at all unless you gave up the *Sarah* and lived ashore in a fine house with a carriage and horses and servants, and to do that you'd have to become a lady—or gentleman," hastily put in Ratcliffe, the figure on the keg suddenly threatening to turn on him. "You'd have to do that, and you'd have to do more than that: you'd have to learn all sorts of things."

"Which sort?"

"Oh, lots. Can you write, Jude?"

"You bet!"

"Told me the other day you couldn't."

"Well, I've most forgot. Pap started to learn me, then

he said he reckoned I was more cut out for makin' puddin's, but he learned me to write my name."

"Well, if you ever grow rich, you'll have to do a lot more than write your name."

"Which way?"

"You'll have to write checks and letters, and, what's more, you'll have to be able to read them."

"Well, I reckon," said the philosophical Jude, "it'll be time enough to bother about that when I'm rich—and seems to me I'll never be rich with them two diddling Satan same as they've done."

"Oh, yes, you will; you are going to be rich some day, as rich as I am. I'm a fortune teller. Show us your hand."

Jude held out a hand, and Ratcliffe examined the palm where the lines were few but straight and clear cut. It was a beautiful little hand, despite the hard work it had done, full of character and vigor, and expressing kindness and honesty and capability.

Ratcliffe had an instinct for hands. A hand could attract or repulse him just as powerfully as a face; more so, perhaps, for a hand never lies.

"Oh, yes," said he, "you are going to be rich, you can't escape it, and you are going to learn reading and writing and arithmetic, and you are going to live to be a hundred."

"Cut me throat first!" said Jude. "Heave ahead."

"And you are going to England some day, and you'll turn into a Britisher."

"Damned if I do! Satan!"

"Hullo!" came a faint voice from below.

"Rat says I'm goin' to turn into a Britisher."

"They wouldn't own you. Quit foolin' and get the dinner ready."

Jude uncurled herself, came down from the keg with a thud, ran to the open skylight, and was about to reply in kind, when her eye caught sight of something that brought her to a halt.

They were handling the canvas on the *Juan*.

"Cark's off!" cried she.

Satan came on deck. Across the blue blaze of the sea they could hear now the clank of the windlass pawls,—the *Juan's* anchor was coming up.

"I thought Sellers would have come on board before they started," said Ratcliffe. "They're in a big hurry, aren't they?"

"You bet," said Satan with a grin. "He'll crack on everything to get to Havana for that dynamite; won't stop to eat their dinners till they're back,—that's what they'd have us believe—swabs!"

"Why, don't you think they are going to Havana?"

"Oh, they're *goin'* to Havana right enough," said Satan. "You watch and you'll see them headin' that way. Look! she's fillin' to the wind."

The anchor was home now, and they watched the sails filling as she headed on the same course the *Dryad* had taken. She dipped her flag, and they returned the compliment; then she drew past the southern reefs, the hull vanished, and nothing remained but the topsails far against the western blue.

Ten minutes later, down below at dinner, Jude, who

had said no word about the departure of the *Juan*, but seemed to have been thinking a lot, suddenly spoke.

"You never told me that chap was going to Havana for dynamite," said Jude. "What for—to bust the wreck open?"

"That's it," replied Satan. "Did you think he wanted it to eat?"

"There's no knowing what a feller may swallow, seeing you've swallowed that yarn," said Jude. "He's gone to Havana to sell us, that's my 'pinion."

"Which way?"

"Lord! there's many a way of sellin' fools."

Ratcliffe felt that the truth was with Jude, he felt an uneasy conviction that they had been done. The hurried departure of Carquinez seemed to put a seal on the business. He looked at Satan expecting an explosion; but Satan was quite calm and helping himself to canned ox tongue.

"Seein' I have the chart," said he, "where's the sellin' to come in?"

"But you've give him the location," said Jude. "You said yourself that the place was fixed on every chart and a chap had only to have Lone Reef in his head to put his claws on the wreck."

"That's so," said Satan; "but the location is no use without the chart."

"What are you gettin' at?"

"I'm tryin' to get at your intellects. How often have you seen that chart?"

"Dozens of times."

"Ever noticed anything queer about it? Not you! Giving sass to your betters is your lay in life instead of usin' your eyes." He pushed his plate away, produced the tobacco box, and, taking the chart from it, laid it on the table.

Jude got up and came behind him to look, while Ratcliffe leaned forward.

"There's the chart," said Satan. "There's the reef, and there's the name of the hooker pointin' at the reef, and there's the latitude and longitude wrote up in the corner. Plain, ain't it?"

"That's plain enough," said Ratcliffe.

Jude, munching a biscuit, concurred.

"Plain enough, ain't it?" went on Satan. "Give a man the name of Lone Reef, and with any old Admiralty chart he'll get there, and he has only to land on the reef to find the hooker stuck there in that crik between them two arms. Jude has seen her, and I've walked over her and 'xamined her, and she'd have been broke open maybe by this, only chaps don't land on reefs like that, not unless a storm lands them. We struck it hustin' for abalones. Plain enough, ain't it? Well, I tell you the whole business is no use to any man who hasn't that chart in his hand and who can't read what's written on it secret. Here you are! Take a good long look, and I'll give you ten dollars if you spot what I mean. It's as clear as simple."

Ratcliffe spread the thing before him on the table.

"I can't see anything in it," said he at last, "except what's written plain enough. There's Rum Cay, there's

the reef, the name of the wreck with a pointer to the reef, and the latitude and longitude up in the corner. No, I can't see anything but that: it all seems plain as a pikestaff. I take an interest in cryptograms, too."

"What's that?"

"Cryptograms? Hidden writing."

"Well, that's what's before you," said Satan. "Pap never twigged it, nor any of the crowd that had the handlin' of it. It's only a month ago I spotted it."

"You never said a word to me," cut in Jude.

"Get back to your place and don't be chewin' in my ear," said Satan, reaching for the chart and pocketing it again. "Tell you? Likely! Why, if I had, you'd have let it out, same as you did the lie of the reef to Rat here the other day. Get on with your dinner! Why haven't we any potatoes?"

"No time to boil them," said Jude, "cleanin' up your mushy abalones."

"No time, and you yarnin' and havin' your future told! I heard you."

"My fault," said Ratcliffe. "I began the business."

"Not you," said Satan. "I heard her start in on it, sayin' what she'd do with a fortune if she had it and finishin' up by mistrustin' me."

"Lord love you for a liar! I only said them two guys had done you in over the wreck," cried Jude. "Don't be stickin' words in my mouth."

"How was it you came to spot the cryptogram?" asked Ratcliffe, eager to cut the dissension short.

"The which?" asked Satan. "Oh, ay—well, it come

natural for me to say to myself, 'Here's a thing that's been hid up and kept secret, yet it's all wrote out as plain as my palm.' I said to myself, 'It's too blame simple! A man who knows where money is hid doesn't write the location on a bit of paper, to be lost, maybe, and picked up by God knows who. Why, drop that chart in the streets of Havana, and the first chap with any knowledge in his head that picks it up will turn it into dollars right off. It's a sure bait for fools, anyhow, and a wreckin' expedition would be out before the end of the week. They'd only have to look up any chart that's been printed the last hundred years to find Lone Reef as easy as the Swimmer Rocks.' Then I said to myself, 'What in the nation did the guy want makin' a chart at all for? Why couldn't he have written on a piece of paper, "The Nombre de Dios lies on Lone Reef, sou'west of Rum Cay"? That's all the chart says, and yet he must go and make drawin's; must have taken him an hour's pen scraping to make that chart.' Puttin' the two things together, I says to myself, 'The feller concerned must have been a fool in two ways if this thing's genuine,—a fool to leave the fac's as plain as an ad for liver pills, and a fool to waste his time drawin' his advertisement instead of writin' it,' but I reckoned he was no fool. Dad was always quotin' some damn ass who said the world was most made up of fools. Well, in my 'xperience that don't hold. Maybe in Europe it does, but not in Havana and the Gulf ports, anyway. So I says to myself, 'Let's try and see what the guy was drivin' at.'"

"And you won't tell us how you did it?"

"I'd just as soon not."

"Why?"

"Because," said Satan, "I may be wrong; though I'm pretty sure I'm right—and I b'lieve in a shut head."

"You opened your head to Cark, anyhow," said Jude.

"I'll tell you once and I won't tell you twice, if I have any more chat out of you, I'll lay into you with a slipper! O' course I opened my head to him! Did you want him hanging round here and sniffin' out the cache? Haven't we got rid of him? I don't want any more talkin'. I've my plan laid out, and you've got to take my orders right from now without questions!" He turned to Ratcliffe. "You don't mind helpin' to work the boat, leavin' sailing directions to me?"

"Not I," said Ratcliffe. "I'm quite content to help and look on, leaving things to you. What's your first move?"

"I'm goin' to clear out of this tomorrow."

"Why, I thought you was going to wait for Cark to come back," said Jude.

"Never you mind what you thought. I'm goin' to clear out of this tomorrow. Meantime, I want more stuff from the cache, and you'd better take the dinghy and get it right off. I want provisions for a month for the three of us."

CHAPTER X

CUSS WORDS

WHEN they had washed up and put the plates in their rack, Jude commandeered Ratcliffe to help with the dinghy. Satan, having given his orders, had retired into himself and the business of patching an old sail. He was seated at the work under the awning, and he seemed scarcely to notice the others as they got the boat away.

"Satan's got something up his sleeve," said Jude as they pulled for the beach. "I reckon he's laying low to get the better of Cark."

"Well, if you ask me," said Ratcliffe, "I think he has got the better of him in some way or another. I don't know how, and I don't want to. I'd sooner wait and see. It's as interesting as a game of chess."

"What's that?"

"Chess—oh, it's a game. I'll show you some day. Don't you ever play games, Jude?"

"You bet! Why, I won five dollars day before we put out buckin' against the red at Chinese Charlie's—y'know Havana? Well, it's on the Calle sin Pedro. They play faro, but mostly r'lette."

"Oh, I didn't mean that sort of games."

"Which sort did you mean?" asked Jude, as the nose of the boat beached on the sand and they scrambled out. "Did you mean whisky drinkin' and cuttin' and carryin' on?"

"Oh, Lord, no! I meant games, just ordinary games."

Jude, the boat well beached, sat down on the blazing sands. It was two hours past noon, and the heat of the day had lifted under the freshening wind from the east, the tide was on the turn, and the far-off lamentations of the gulls around the southern reef-spurs came mixed with the fall of the waves,—waves scarcely a foot high, crystal clear, less waves than giant ripples.

Beyond the *Sarah Tyler* and her reflection on the water lay the violet-colored sea, infinity, and the blue of sky, broken only by a gull, spar white in the dazzle.

Ratcliffe sat down beside his companion. Jude, like any old salt, had her moments of dead laziness. Active as a kitten as a rule, she would suddenly knock off, when the fancy took her, "let go all holts," to use Satan's expression, and laze. You couldn't kick her out of it, Satan said.

She had brought an old pair of boots for going through the bay cedar bushes. It wasn't good to walk among the bushes unshod: there were tarantulas there, and scorpions, to say nothing of stump cacti. The boots were lying beside her on the sand, to be put on only at the last moment.

"What you mean by ordinary games?" asked Jude suddenly, finishing the inspection of a new variety of

soft-shell crab she had just caught and flinging it into the sea.

"Oh, the games people play," said Ratcliffe, who had almost forgotten what they had been talking about. He tried to explain, and found it singularly hard, especially when cross-examined.

Jude did not seem able to understand grown men and women spending half a day "knockin' a ball about."

"I used to play ma'bles with Dutch Mike's kids when we were at Pensacola," said she. "Mike ran a whisky joint, and the kids were pretty ornery. When we'd done playin' marbles they'd have a cussia' bee."

"What on earth's that?"

"Well, you've heard of a spellin' bee—you get a prize for spellin' the best. Well, a cussin' bee you start cussin' each other, and the one that cusses hardest gets the prize. Pap never knew till one day he let into me with a strap for somethin' or 'nother and I let fly at him. Then he found it was Mike's children who'd been learnin' me, and he had a dust-up with Mike on the wharf, and left him limpin' for the rest of his natural. Did you cuss when you was young?"

"No," said Ratcliffe. "I learned that later."

"'R you any good at it?"

"Upon my word, I don't know."

"Have a try," said Jude, losing her languor. "Clench your fists to it and have a go at me, and then I'll have a go at you—there's no one listenin'. Pretend you're the skipper and I'm a hand that's been haulin' on the wrong rope."

"No," said Ratcliffe. "I'm no use at it, and it's not a nice game, anyway. I'd sooner play at something else."

Jude sniffed. She evidently felt snubbed. "I'm not a baby to be playing games," said she. "You can go and play by yourself if you want to."

She collapsed on her back with her knees up and her old hat covering her face; then from under the hat:

"You'll hear all the swearin' you want to in a minute from the old hooker."

"You mean Satan?"

"Yep, the minute he turns his eye ashore and sees us lazin' here instead of workin'."

"Then, come on."

"Not me," said Jude, "not till Satan begins. I'm too comfortable. I been working hard all the morning while you two was aboard the *Juan* clackin' with Sellers and havin' drinks, I bet. I'm going to rest myself—what did you have?"

"Ginger beer and a cigar."

"Did you take notice of Cark's face?"

"Rather!"

"They say he hasn't any one side to his face where the patch is. I'd like to see him with the patch off, wouldn't you?"

"Lord, no! I saw quite enough of him with it on. Come, get up, and let's get to work."

"I'm not goin' to work no more," mumbled Jude drowsily. "I'm dead sick of fetchin' and carryin'. Let Satan go and fetch and carry for himself. I'm going to stick here."

"On the island?"

"Yep."

"And give up Satan and the *Sarah*?"

"Yep."

"But what will you do for a living?"

"Start a la'ndry."

"But there's no one here to give you any washing to do."

"Then I'll have all the easier time."

"That's true. It's a bright idea, and I'll stay with you and carry the laundry basket."

"No, you won't! I'll stick here alone."

Suddenly, across the water from the *Sarah* and shattering this fantasy, came a voice. It was Satan's voice, distant and borne on the breeze. Ratcliffe thought he could make out the words "lazy dog."

He got up. Jude with the old panama over her face had stiffened out as if dead. He tried to turn her over with his foot. Then he felt half frightened. Had the sun got to her head, and was all that nonsense talk delirium?

He knelt down beside her and shook her.

"Jude, what's the matter with you?"

No reply.

He took the panama from the face. The eyes were closed and the features were in repose.

Now, really alarmed, he jumped up, ran down to the boat, seized the baling tin, and filled it with sea water. He had never seen a case of sunstroke, but he had heard cold water on the head was a remedy.

As he turned back with the tin the corpse was sitting up putting on its boots.

"What're you doing with that baling tin?" said Jude.

"I'll jolly soon show you!" said he, making toward her. "Shamming dead!"

But before he could reach her she was gone among the bushes, one boot on, the other off. Then, flinging the baling tin away, he joined her, helped her on with the boot, and they started. Jude, as if to make up, put her hand into his in a trusting and loving manner. She swung his hand as they walked. Then, near their destination, she flung it away and made off, hunting like a dog among the bushes till she found what she was in search of,—a long, knotted rope.

"What's that for?" asked he.

"You wait and see," replied Jude. "Here's the cache. Mind where you're walkin' or you'll be into it."

The cache was well hidden among the bay cedars. The opening, eight feet long by six broad, was covered over with short poles spread with cut branches gone withered with the sun. When they had got the covering off, Jude tied one end of the rope to a tree close by and dropped the other end into the cache. She swung herself down by it, and Ratcliffe followed.

From the floor of this place a step, two feet high, gave entrance to the cave.

"You see," said Jude. "It may rain till it's black, but it never floods the cave. The water drains off before it can rise the height of the step."

There were a candle and some matches inside the cave entrance. She lit the candle and led the way.

Ratcliffe was astounded, less by the size of the place, than the stacks of goods,—canned peaches, condensed milk, corned beef, tomatoes, ox tongues, Heinz's pickles, Nabisco wafers. The old brig, making for some gulf port, must have been a floating Italian warehouse as far as cargo was concerned.

"I don't wonder at Satan not wanting Sellers and Carquinez to spot all this," said he. "Why, there must be five hundred pounds' worth of stuff here. Aren't you afraid that nigger who skipped from you at Pine Island may split?"

"Sakes, no! He was too much afeared of Satan. Satan was always threatening to skin him. Besides, he doesn't know. We told him this place was Turtle Island, and that's a hundred and fifty miles to s'uth'ard. You trust Satan to keep a thing dark. Here, catch hold of the candle while I collect."

There were two sacks folded up on the floor. She started collecting things, and when the sacks were half-filled Jude, clambering out of the pit, hauled them up by the rope.

"Anything more?" asked he, from below.

"I reckon that will be enough," said Jude, looking down at him. "It'll take us all our time to carry them to the boat, and if Satan ain't satisfied he can come and fetch some more himself."

"Then drop the rope; I want to get out."

Jude, kneeling at the cache edge, lowered the rope gingerly. He reached up, and was just about to seize the loose end when it eluded him.

"Why don't you catch hold?" asked Jude.

"I can't. How could I when you pulled it up again. Go on, drop it and don't play the fool."

"Who's playin' the fool?"

"You are."

The rope, instead of descending again, was hauled right out of the cache. Then a face appeared, looking down and framed against the sky. He had forgotten the snub he had given her on the beach, but she hadn't.

"D'y'r'member what you said down there on the beach?" asked Jude.

"No, what about?"

"Cussin'."

"Oh, yes."

"Said I wanted you to play games that wasn't nice."

"I never said any such thing."

"Didn't yer? Well, whether you did or you didn't, you've got to swear before I let you out."

"Well, then I'll stay in. Go on, Jude, don't be silly. It's cold down here."

The rope came down, and he was just seizing the end when it was whipped out of his hand.

"Damn!" said Ratcliffe wholeheartedly.

"Now you're talkin'," said Jude.

Like a boy fishing for polliwogs, she lowered the rope again and snatched it up suddenly, bringing with it another oath.

But the third time he was too quick for her. Then as he came swarming up with skinned knuckles and rage in his heart, she bolted. He chased her, dodging here and there among the bushes, then he chased her round a tree, caught her, and, in his anger and irritation somehow, kissed her.

The perfectly amazing smack on the face that followed was revelation; it also knocked him off his balance so that he sat down as though cut off at the knees.

CHAPTER XI

THE COMING OF CLEARY

SHE stood for a moment, frightened at her handiwork. Then, as he pulled himself together, she drew away a step.

“What ails you?” asked she.

Ratcliffe, sitting up with his hand to the top of his head, groaned.

She drew a step closer. Then she saw that he was laughing, and drew a step back.

“Get up, and don’t be fooling,” said she.

“Fooling! And who started it?” asked he.

Jude made no reply. She turned and went off to the cache, lugged the sacks a bit more away from the opening, and started to put the poles across. When he joined her on the work she wouldn’t speak. She was evidently mortally offended.

He knew at once and by some fine instinct what was the matter with her. He had trod on her dignity, like the Thelusson woman,—treated her like a child, that is to say like a girl, for the two things were synonymous with Jude, who seemed to have no more idea of the realities of sex than a pumpkin.

THE COMING OF CLEARY 117

When she did speak at last, it was to give jeering orders.

"Lord! Did you never have to use your hands? Which way is that to be sticking the poles? Why, it'd take twenty dozen to cover it the way you're doing! Leave a foot and a half between them."

"Right," said Ratcliffe humbly.

"I didn't say two foot."

"Sorry."

"Now the branches an' stuff."

She had reserved one of the poles, for what reason soon became apparent.

Each sack was too heavy to be carried by one person, so she slung one to the middle of the pole, and they started for the beach, Caleb and Joshua fashion, Ratcliffe in front.

It was horrible work. They had to keep step, which was difficult; owing to the bushes, the going was bad. The sack kept slipping toward Jude, owing to the inequality of their heights, and the pressure of the pole on his shoulder was galling; also the wind had changed and was coming from the direction of the gulf, warm and moist, like the breath from a great mouth.

When they reached the beach he sat down. Unused to hard work and unused to the climate, he was sweating and exhausted. Jude looked comparatively cool and fresh.

"Now then, Lazybones!" said Jude. Then she collapsed also, sitting down with her knees up and her arms round them.

She seemed to have forgotten the sack, Ratcliffe, everything, as she sat whistling dreamily between her teeth and staring across the water toward the *Sarah*.

She had kicked off her boots, and her toes were playing with the sand. Uncramped by boots, her feet were as expressive as her hands.

"You'll hear Satan begin to holler in a minute," said Jude.

"Let him," said the other, "I'm not going to stir another foot till I've rested myself."

"Oh, he won't holler at you. It's me he'll go for; you're the first-class passenger."

"No, I'm not: I'm one of the crew."

Jude laughed in a mirthless manner.

"Well, I reckon myself one, anyhow," said he. "I wouldn't have come on board unless I was to help in working the boat."

"Oh, Satan won't mind you helpin' to work her," replied she; "but he didn't bring you aboard for that."

"I know—and it was awfully decent of him. He just thought I'd like the cruise."

Jude sniffed.

"I reckon you don't know Satan," said she.

"How?"

"Satan never does nothing for nothing."

"Well, what did he bring me aboard for?"

"Lord knows," said Jude; "but he's got something up his sleeve, sure. Mind you, Satan's as straight as they make them unless he's dealin' with law chaps and such, and you'd be safe with him if you was blind and dumb

and covered with diamonds only waitin' to be picked off you. You see, you're straight, and anyone that's straight with Satan he's straight with them. It's different with lawyers, or guys like Cark and Sellers, who'd beat their own gran'mothers out of their store teeth. All the same, you look out with Satan. He's got some plan about you, sure."

"What sort of plan is it, do you think, Jude?"

"Lord knows. Nothing to harm you, anyway; maybe it's to go shares in some deal—I dunno."

"Well, I'm up for any deal he likes to propose that would benefit him—as much money as he wants."

"Satan's not set on money," said Jude, "not in a big way. I reckon he's something like Pap. Pap would take no end of trouble making a few dollars, but he was never really set on bein' rich. I reckon he took up that old wreck business more for the fun of the thing than the dollars. He used to say great riches was only trouble to a man, an' that he only wanted God's good air and 'nough to live on."

"Well, maybe he was right," said Ratcliffe.

"I reckon Satan cottoned to you because he thought you was honest," said Jude.

"Well, I hope I am."

"He said to me, right off, after you'd gone back to the yacht, 'I reckon that feller's honest,' he said."

Ratcliffe laughed.

"You see," went on Jude, "you don't pick up honest parties round these parts, not by the bushel. You might rake Havana with a finetooth comb lookin' for fellers

that wouldn't do you, but you wouldn't find none. It's the same all round the gulf, from N'Orleans to Cam-pêche; you can't stick your nose in anywhere without being stung—if you're a softy."

"So he liked me because he thought I was straight. What did you like me for, Jude?"

"Lord! if you don't fancy yourself! Who told you I liked you?"

"You did last night. You said you and Satan took to me right off."

"Oh, did I? Well, maybe it was them pajamas—Hullo!" The shrill notes of a bo'sn's whistle came over the water. She sprang to her feet.

Satan's form appeared at the rail of the *Sarah*. He was making movements with his arms as though signaling, and Jude flung up an arm in answer.

Then, shading her eyes, she looked seaward.

"What's up?" asked Ratcliffe.

"Come on!" said Jude.

She seized the sack, called on him to help her, and between them they ran it down to the water's edge. Then they got the dinghy afloat, the sack on board, and started.

"What's up?" again asked Ratcliffe, as they rowed.

"Sail," said Jude.

He had seen nothing, perhaps because of the sun-dazzle on the water or because he had not looked in the right direction. The sensitiveness of the Tylers to the approach of strangers and their hawklike vision struck him as belonging almost to the uncanny.

THE COMING OF CLEARY 121

Satan had rigged a tackle, and without a word uttered the sack was got aboard and below. Then and not till then did Satan speak.

"It's Cleary," said he.

Jude took the old glass he had been using, and examined the stranger, then she handed it to Ratcliffe. He turned it on the fleck of sail which sprang gigantic into the form of a big fore-and-aft-rigged boat, beating up for the island, the late afternoon sunlight flashing back from the foam at the forefoot and her foam-wet bows.

"Who is Cleary?" asked he, handing back the glass.

"Cark's partner," said Satan, "sort of half and half partner. They're always bestin' one another. Cleary is by way of bein' a ship breaker and dealer in odds and ends; owns a couple of ratty old schooners besides that old ketch. Wonder what he's doin' down here? Curse him!"

"He's after Cark, most likely," said Jude. "Maybe he's got a smell of the wreck."

"Maybe," replied Satan. "He's always spyin' on Cark. There's nothin' much that Cleary don't know, and if he got wind that Cark's on a likely job he'd put out after him."

It seemed to Ratcliffe all at once that the old wreck lying on that unseen reef might have been likened to a carcass in the desert, and that he was watching the gathering of the vultures to a feast.

First Carquinez, now Cleary—how many more would come circling out of the blue?

He said so, and Satan concurred.

"It's got out somehow or 'nother," said Satan, "and Lord only knows there may be half a dozen others on the hunt. You see, the very fac' of Cark's puttin' to sea himself would give suspicions to half Havana; but Cleary is the only man beside Cark that knows my ports of call. He knows I come here for abalones, and he knows I hunt round Pine Island, not to say other places."

Satan fell into meditation for a moment. Then he resumed:

"That's what the cuss has been doin'. He's been on the hunt for me, same as Cark was, only for different reasons. Now you wait and see. Jude!"

"Hullo," said Jude.

"Did you cover the cache proper?"

"You bet; but there's a sack of stuff we didn't manage to bring off. It's among the bushes."

"It'll have to lay there."

"What's the name of Cleary's boat?" asked Ratcliffe as he watched the approaching ketch.

"The *Natches*," said Satan, "an old cod boat, built at Marthas Vineyard. Lord! ain't they crackin' on! Cleary's in a hurry. There's no denyin' that."

He whistled contentedly as he leaned on the rail, and Ratcliffe, watching his hatchet-sharp profile, wondered what was coming next. Of one thing he was beginning to feel certain,—Cleary, Carquinez, Sellers, and anything else that might come out of Havana on the long trail for plunder would find a match in Satan.

CHAPTER XII

AN HONEST MAN

THE ketch carried on, heading straight for the *Sarah*; then, spilling the wind from her sails, she came round, presenting a full view of her dirty old hull and dropping her anchor two cable lengths away.

Almost on the last rasp of the anchor chain she dropped a boat, which shoved off for the *Sarah*.

"That's Cleary," said Satan, shading his eyes.

It was, and as Cleary came on board, leg over rail, saluting Satan with the affability of old acquaintanceship and the quarterdeck with a squirt of tobacco juice, Ratcliffe fell to wondering what sort of place Havana might be and what else it might give up in the way of detriments.

Carquinez was bad and Sellers was bad, but Cleary was—Cleary. Against the gold and blue of afternoon, the sight of this faded man, who looked as though he had seen better days, who suggested a broken-down schoolmaster, with a slungshot in his pocket, struck Ratcliffe with astonishment and depression. It was as though the dazzling air had suddenly split to disclose a London slum.

"Hullo! Hullo!" said Cleary. "Thought I recognized the old hooker. What you doin' down here away?"

Jude made a dive for the galley, and Ratcliffe could hear her choking. The sound banished the feeling of depression and repulsion created by the newcomer and brightened him somehow.

Here was the comic man of the pantomime come aboard.

"What am I doin'?" said Satan. "I'm fishin' for chair-backs. What are you doin' yourself?"

Cleary turned, spat his quid overboard, and then, leaning on the rail, looking seaward, with his back to the others, and, just as easy as though he were aboard his own ship, laughed.

"Fishin' for chair-backs!" Then, sluing his head half round, "How's the abalone fishin' gone?"

"Jude!" cried Satan.

"Hullo!"

"Bring up them pearls!"

Cleary turned, and, leaning with his back against the rail, began to fill an old pipe in a languid and leisurely manner. Then, when the pearls were produced, he turned them from the matchbox into the palm of his hand.

"How much?" asked Cleary.

"Forty dollars," said Satan.

"Forty which?"

"Dollars."

"Ain't worth forty cents."

"Well, who's askin' you to deal?"

Cleary carefully poured the pearls into the matchbox, closed it, and put it in his pocket.

Satan did not seem to mind.

"Jude!" said Satan.

"What?"

"Bring up them cigars!"

"Who's the gentleman?" asked Cleary.

"Gentleman came aboard for a cruise off a yacht. You needn't mind him; he's only out for pleasure."

Cleary nodded to Ratcliffe, who nodded in return. Then things hung for a moment till Jude appeared with the cigar-box, and the newcomer, having tapped the tobacco out of his pipe, chose a cigar, lit it, and, leaning with his back against the rail and his thumbs in the armholes of his old waistcoat, blew clouds. He seemed for a moment far away in thought, and Ratcliffe, watching him and Satan,—Jude having vanished again, attacked with another fit of choking,—puzzled his head in vain to find out the inner meaning of what was going on. The wretched pearls were scarcely worth five dollars, he had heard Satan say so, and Cleary, evidently an expert, was not the man to pay eight times their worth, nor was Satan the man to allow the other to pocket them.

Then suddenly Cleary spoke.

"Cark's a clever man, don't you think?"

"Well, seein' he's your partner, you're a better judge than me," replied Satan.

"Well, maybe that's so," said Cleary. "Partners we were, and partners we are till I ketch him and bust him."

"Why, what's he been doin' to you?"

"Now, I'll tell you," said Cleary. "I'm an honest man. I don't say in trade I'm not above shavin' the barber, but between man an' man I'm honest, and I'm goin' to tell you straight out Cark and me has been layin' for you ever since your dad was fool enough to give Cark the tip about that treasure business. I wasn't keen on it, same as he was. I allowed there might be somethin' in it—but that don't matter. What gets my monkey is Cark he gets fearful thick with Sellers, then he cools off on the business of the treasure gettin', and a matter of two weeks ago he rigs up a job for me to see after at Pensacola that'd have taken me two months and more. I says to myself, 'There's somethin' in this.' Says nothin' to Cark. Off I goes, taking the old *Natches*. Hadn't reached the latitood of Key West when back I puts, and finds Cark gone with the *Juan* and Sellers.

"Then I knew he's started to hunt for you again, leavin' me in the lonely cold. He's been huntin' you ever since last fall, that's straight; but he'd never let me down before. He'd always told me the results. I tell you he's huntin' for you now, and the surprisin' thing is he hasn't found you, knowing as he does this is one of your grounds."

"How do you know he hasn't found me?"

"What you mean?"

"Why, he was here this morning and off not four hours ago."

"Christopher!"

"Him and Sellers."

"Holy Mike!"

"You was comin' up from West, you ought to have sighted him."

"Sighted nothin' but a tank, and her nearly hull down."

"Well, if you'd been here a few hours earlier, you'd have smelt the old *Juan* as well as sightin' her."

"Was he here on business?"

"He was,—he was after that wreck Pap told him of. You just told me he's been after me since last fall spyin' on me. I know it, and I'm pretty sick of the business. B'sides, he's as good to help in it as anyone else; so I've made a contrac' with him."

"*Sufferin'* Moses!—a contrac' with Cark!" Cleary stood for a moment as though absorbing this news, then he laughed, the funniest laugh Ratcliffe had ever heard, —it was like the whinny of a pony. He saw Jude's head at the cabin hatch, and the head suddenly duck and vanish, as though her body had been doubled up.

"A contrac' with Cark!"

"Well, what are you laughin' at?"

"Nothin'. May I ask what terms?"

"We go shares."

"In the pickin's?"

"What else?"

"Have you give him the location?"

"I have."

"You've give him the location and let him slip his cable—him and Sellers?"

"What odds? It'll take a month to bust her open

and hunt for the stuff. I'll be after him tomorrow."

Cleary crossed his arms and stood with the half-cigar stuck in the corner of his mouth and pointing skyward, his eyes fixed on the deck and his left eye half closed.

Jude's face had reappeared at the cabin hatch, and the grin on it spread to Ratcliffe's.

Satan alone was unmoved, half-sitting on the keg and cutting up some tobacco.

"Well," said Cleary at last, "you've made your bargain, there's no gettin' round that. *I'm* not wishin' to poke my nose in your business, nor to ask what your share is to be, but I'm partners with Cark, and you see how he's let me down—cayn't you give me a lead?"

"Which way?"

"Give me a lead to the location. It won't make a cent difference to you."

"How's that?"

"Clear enough, I don't want none of your share. Cark's the man I want to tap, having a right to, being partners."

Satan seemed to turn this matter over in his mind for a moment. Then he said, "Suppose we come back to them pearls?"

"Right," said Cleary in a lively voice. "What's this you was askin', forty? Well, forty you shall have."

He produced an old brown pocketbook, counted out four ten-dollar notes, and handed them over.

Satan examined each note, back and front, folded them, and placed them into his pocket.

"Now," said Cleary, "out with the lead!"

"You'll have it tomorrow," said Satan. "I'm pickin' up my anchor tomorrow mornin'. You've only to follow me."

"I'd rayther have the indications on paper."

"Maybe you would, but you won't. I've made my bargain with Cark, and there's nothin' in the contrac' about givin' the location away to third parties. I can't help you followin' me."

"I take you," said Cleary.

CHAPTER XIII

PROBLEMS

THE sun was nearly touching the horizon when he dropped into his boat and rowed off.

"Look here!" said Ratcliffe. "Are you in earnest with that chap?"

"I sure am," said Satan.

"Going to take him down to Lone Reef?"

"Yep."

"But how about Carquinez? We had got to wait for him here till he gets back from Havana with the dynamite."

"Yes," said Satan, "we'd got to wait here one week, or maybe ten days allowin' for weather—where was you born?"

"How?"

"Cark's tried to sell me a pup, that's how! He's gone to no Havana: he's crackin' on for the wreck with every stitch he can carry. Reckons to bust her open and scoop the boodle while we're layin' here rubbin' our noses and waitin' for him. Mind you," said Satan, "I may be wrong, but that's my 'pinion."

"But he sailed off toward Havana."

"Lord! Hasn't he a rudder?"

"All the same, would it pay him?"

"How?"

"Well, if he played a dirty trick on you like that, wouldn't he be afraid you'd split?"

"Who to?"

"To the authorities at Cuba."

"D'you remember Sellers talkin' about landin' the stuff," asked Satan, "sayin' they'd have to take it round to Santiago way? They thought I was drinkin' all that in. If there were any dollars in the business, d'you think they'd touch Cuba? Not they! They'd either cache the stuff or run it to some likely port. I was laughin' in my hat all the time. Now you may think me a suspicious cuss. I'm not; but a feller has to run by compass in this world or go off his course, and my compass in this turn-out is Cark. I say he's gone down to Lone Reef and given me the left leg over the business, and my compass is the fac' that he can't run straight. Not if he tried to, he couldn't run straight; nor could Sellers nor Cleary. If them fellers were straight, I'd match them and give them a fair deal. As it is, they're like a lot of blind bally-hoolies playin' blindman's buff, runnin' round and round, with me in the middle, tryin' to kidoodle me and bein' kidoodled themselves. Forty dollars for them rotten pearls, and all sorts of fixin's out of Sellers—and *I haven't done with them yet!*"

It had seemed to Ratcliffe, on board the *Juan*, that Carquinez was the spider of the web of this business. It seemed to him now that the spider was Satan.

He began to wonder was there any wreck at all, was

the treasure story a myth. The idea of these rogues being incited to dreams of fortune so that they might be plundered of pots of paint and cans of turpentine and a few dollars appealed to him immensely. He remembered Thelusson and Skelton, he remembered Jude's yarn about fruit steamers being held up, he remembered Carquinez and Sellers, and he had just seen Cleary; and of a sudden Satan's ocean-wide activities appeared before him in nightmare contrast with their microscopic results. Great steamers stopped for a bunch of bananas, yachts lying idle to careen the *Sarah*, ships sailing from Havana to hunt for buried treasure—but in reality to supply the wandering *Sarah* with cans of turpentine and a few dollars! Was there any treasure, or was the whole thing a Tyler fake invented by Pap and handed to his family as an heirloom? He could not resist the question.

"That chart you showed us," said he,—“is there anything really in it?”

Satan took him at once.

“The chart's all right,” said he, “for them that can read it. If you mean is it *genuine*, I reckon it is—for them that can read it. We'll see some day if I'm right or wrong; but, honest truth, I'm not botherin' much about it,—the chances are so big, as I told you before, against treasure huntin', and even if we strike it what's the use of barrels of gold to a feller like me? If you ask me, I'm botherin' more about the kid than huntin' for money.”

“You mean?”

“Jude. Suppose I was to get a bash on the head from one of them cusses, or drop to the smallpox, same

as I pretended to Sellers, what'd become of the kid?"

The sound of the "kid" frying fish for supper came mixed with the question.

"I know," said Ratcliffe, "that's a problem that must often occur to you, I should think."

"You've seen the sort of crowd Havana's made of," went on Satan. "It's hard to tell which is worse, the Yanks or the Spaniards, and there's not a seaport that's not the same, and when I think of me lyin' dead and her driftin' loose, it gets my goat. It'd be different if she was a boy."

"Besides that," said the other, "she can't go on always as she is now."

"How'd you mean?"

"Well, dressed as she is now. She'll grow up."

"Sure," said Satan.

"She'll have to dress differently some day."

"Meanin' skirts?"

"Yes."

Satan laughed a hollow laugh. The idea seemed so futile that he did not dwell upon it, or seemed not to.

"Have you any female relations yourself?" asked he.

"Lots," replied Ratcliffe, calling up in memory his cousins and aunts, females of the highest upper-middle-class respectability, and vaguely wondering what they would think of Jude could they see her.

"The bother is," said Satan, "she don't take to women folk; always was against them, and that Thelsson woman put the cap on the business, kissin' her and handin' out slop talk. Well, I don't know. I reckon she'll have

to go on bein' what she is till somethin' happens; but it would have been a lot handier if she'd been born a boy."

He turned and went below.

The sun had sunk beyond Palm Island, and a violet dusk, forerunner of the dark, was spreading through the sky. Over beyond the *Natches* the sea for a moment became hard looking as a floor of beryl, then vague.

Ratcliffe, lingering for a moment watching this transformation scene, found himself thinking of Jude and her problem. The Tylers had taken an extraordinarily firm hold upon him. He knew them more intimately than he knew his own relations, or fancied so. It seemed to him that he had known them for years.

When this cruise was over and he packed up his traps and left them, he would probably never see them again. Jude and Satan would go their way and he would go his way—and what would happen to Jude? Suppose Satan were to die, get knocked on the head or "fall to the smallpox"? The thought hurt him almost as much as it hurt Satan; for Jude had, somehow or another, captured his mind and touched his heart, and her youth and absolute irresponsibility before the major facts of life had infected him in the most extraordinary manner.

Over there on the island, engaged in the serious matter of provisioning the *Sarah*, they had been carrying on like children. He had not thought of it then; now, reflecting sanely, it rose before him together with the rest of this strange cruise, and for a moment the whole business seemed mad, absolutely mad. The supersane figure of Skelton rose up before him, and beyond Skelton, Oxford,

the calm, sane English country, where the Tylers would have been impossible, the hard bourgeois conventions of the upper-upper-middle classes, those uncles, cousins, and aunts to whom Class was as holy as Sunday and to whom Jude would be absolutely invisible as she was.

He was engaged in these reflections when a voice broke the stillness of the evening, a half-tired, half-cantankerous voice, the voice of an overworked housekeeper who had been frying fish while others have been idling.

"Ain't you comin' to help me?" inquired the voice.

CHAPTER XIV

HANTS AND OTHER THINGS

DOWN below, at supper, the injured housekeeper was still in evidence and rose to a charge that the fish was overfried. Satan was the accuser.

The defendant, "het up" and flushed, replied in the language of the sea :

"Go'n fry your head! Clackin' on deck and leavin' me to do the work—the pair of you! It's all men's good for."

"Why, I thought you was a man!" said Satan. "You cut and carry on like a man; scratch you and your tongue goes both ends like a woman. Start you on a job, and you sit down to it before it's half done. I saw you lazin' on the beach, and now look where we are,—there's a sack of stuff not brought off and how are we to bring it with Cleary messin' round?"

"It wasn't my fault," said Jude. Then she checked herself and her eyes met Ratcliffe's.

"It was my fault," said he. "I got tired."

Jude looked at him. This defense of her, trifling though it was, seemed to make a new relationship between them. It seemed to her that Ratcliffe had suddenly become different. She could not tell what the difference

HANTS AND OTHER THINGS 137

was or how it had come about in the least, or why she half-resented his shielding her, even in this small matter; then her eyes fell away and rested on the table before her.

"It wasn't," said she. "It was my fault. I was foolin' when I ought to have been workin', and now the stuff is lyin' there—" She choked, and then to the horror of Satan she pushed her plate away and broke into tears, hiding her face on her folded arms. Then, before the astonished ones could speak, she rose and dashed out of the cabin.

"Land's sake!" cried Satan. "What ails her? Cryin'! She's never done that before—and all over that rotten sack—why, let it lay there, cuss the thing!"

He went on with his supper in an irritable manner.

"She's overtired, maybe," said Ratcliffe. "Wait and I'll fetch her back."

He left the cabin and came on deck.

The moon had not risen yet, and the riding light, which had been run up before supper, showed yellow against the stars.

Not a sign of Jude.

He went forward. There she was, huddled up in the bows.

"Jude!"

The bundle sniffed.

"Come on down to supper. Satan's not angry."

"Who the"—sniff—"cares whether'es angry or not? You lea' me alone!"

"But what are you crying about?"

"*Ain't* cryin'!"

"Well, what are you lying on the deck for?"

"'Cause I choose."

"Come on down and help to clear the things away."

"Clear them yourself!"

He bent down and tried to take her arm. She shook him off, rose suddenly like a released spring, ran to the side where the dinghy was moored, and got over the rail.

He looked over. She was in the boat unfastening the painter.

"Where on earth are you going?"

"Ashore."

She pushed off.

Ratcliffe came down to the cabin.

"She's gone ashore."

"She's gone for that sack," said Satan unconcernedly.

"Reckons to get it off before moon rise, I expect."

"But it's too heavy for one."

"She'll do it. You've put her monkey up makin' her confess it was her fault. She's never done that before in all her born life. She's just natural proud and she'd as soon cut her tongue out as give in she was in the wrong. You've made her do more'n I've ever made her do, and how you've done it—well, search me.

"You aren't gettin' on with your supper," said Satan after a pause.

"Oh, I've had enough. I was wondering if she has her boots for going through that bush stuff."

"She's got them all right. They were in the dinghy: she didn't bring them aboard. You're worryin' a lot about the kid."

HANTS AND OTHER THINGS 139

"Well, maybe. She's the jolliest kid I ever struck, and I don't want any harm to come to her; the pluckiest, too. There's not many people would go off alone in the dark like that in a place like this."

"Lord bless your soul!" said Satan. "That's nothin', no more than walkin' down the street to Jude. Do you think sailin' these seas is all fair-weather work? Why, we've been rubbin' our noses in *destruction* since she was born. She don't know what fear is."

"I could tell that from her face."

"It's her face that's troublin' me," said Satan. "Pass me the water pitcher, will you? She's begun to take after mother. A few months ago she was the homeliest little pup ever littered; but she's beginnin' to pick up in looks, and if she takes after her mother's side in looks and ways—Lord save us!"

"Was your mother good looking?"

"Well," said Satan, "I don't know what you call good looks. Pap said she was a nacheral calamity; that was after she'd bolted with the Baptis' man. It wasn't the looks so much as the somethin' about her that'd make a blind man rubber after her if she passed him in the street, that's what Pap said. He never said no prayers, but when he was talkin' of Jude I've heard him say time and again, 'Thank the Lord she don't take after her mother!' and now it's comin' out, same as the ace of spades a shark has hid up his sleeve—and what's comin' after, Lord only knows."

"How do you mean?"

"Well, I scarce know myself, but Pap said those sort

of women couldn't help bein' nacheral calamities, attractin' chaps and turnin' the world upside down. He said a man, once they'd got the clutch on him, was no more use than a hypnotized fowl, whatever that is. You've heard what Jude said about skirts—well, I'm thinkin' that's all baby talk, an' it's my 'pinion when she gets her nacheral sailing orders she'll be into skirts some day, same as a duck takes to water, and hypnotizing chaps, same as her mother before her."

"I wouldn't be surprised," said Ratcliffe; "but I don't think she'll be a natural calamity. I think, from what I have seen of her, that she has a fine character, honest as the day, good as gold."

"Maybe," said Satan; "but you never know what a woman is, seems to me, till she's been rubbed against a man. Those were Pap's words and he'd got a headpiece on him. Well, I reckon time will tell."

They went on deck.

The moon had not risen yet, and the island lay like a humped shadow in the starlight. To seaward the anchor light of the *Natches* showed a yellow point, and from the beach came the lullaby of little waves falling on the sand.

"Now if it wasn't these days," said Satan, "I'd be in two minds about putting out straight now, rather than lyin' all night by that feller Cleary."

"What do you mean by these days?"

"Well, in the old throat-cuttin' days I reckon Cleary would have gone through us, sunk the old *Sarah*, and taken me aboard his hooker with a gun at my head to make me show him the way to the wreck; but things is

HANTS AND OTHER THINGS 141

different now. Fellers are afraid of the law. Cark's mortally afraid of the law, so's Cleary."

"What time do you start tomorrow?"

"After sun-up, if the wind holds."

"It will be a joke if we find Carquinez at the reef. What will he say, do you think?"

"Cark? Oh, he'll not mind. There ain't no shame in Cark. He'll have broke his contrac' by not goin' to Havana, he'll stand proved to the eyes as a damn cheat. He won't mind: the contrac' not bein' regular, the law can't have him."

"I expect Cleary will go for him."

"Maybe," said Satan. "Then we'll have some fun. There's Jude."

Something like a swimming water rat was breaking the star shimmer on the sea. It was the dinghy.

Jude was sculling it from behind, noiselessly. It came alongside to starboard like a ghost, and with it came Jude's voice calling for the tackle. Then the sack came aboard and after it Jude.

"Well, you've done it smart," said Satan, "and no mistake. Now off down with you and have your supper. We've got to start bright and early in the morning."

Jude said nothing. Her anger and irritability seemed to have departed. She kicked off her boots, hitched up her trousers, and started down below.

"She never keeps a grudge up," said Satan.

Away in the middle of the night Ratcliffe was awakened by a stifled scream, the voice of Satan promptly following.

"Wake up! What ails you?"

"For the Land's sake, where am I?"

"In your hammock. What're you dreamin' of?"

"Gee-owsts."

"Hants, you mean."

"Black faces they had, and they was chasin' me round and round them trees."

"That's what comes of stuffin' yourself and goin' to bed on top of it. Get off your back and onto your side. Wakin' a body up like that! What was they like?"

"The hants?"

"Yep."

"I can't be talkin' for fear of wakin' him up."

"He's asleep. I hear him snorin'. What was they like?"

"They'd black faces and tails like cows—an' I'd ruther not be talkin' of them."

"Wonder what it means dreamin' of them things?"

"Nothin' good—bad weather, most like."

"Glass is steady."

"Well, maybe we'll bust on a reef or somethin'."

"Oh, shet your head!"

"Shet yours. I'm wantin' to get asleep."

Silence.

Ratcliffe could hear the water outside tickling the ribs of the old *Sarah*. A bigger swell was running, and she rose to it with balloon-like buoyancy. A score of little voices from the trickle and slap of the sea against the timbers to the click of the rudder chain marked her movements.

HANTS AND OTHER THINGS 143

The idea of the ghosts chasing Jude round the dream tree reminded him of how he had chased her round the real tree and kissed her—kissed her out of irritation.

Something in his half-asleep state told him he had been a fool to do that. It was all done in play, just as a little boy might kiss a little girl; but he was not a little boy. What had prompted him?

Then as he lay dissolving into slumber the groaning timbers of the *Sarah* said something that sounded like "nachelor calamity," and then, the door of sleep flung wide, he was walking on a blazing beach with Cleary.

The *Natches* and the *Juan* were at anchor out on the blue dream sea, a great wreck was heaved up on the sands, and when they reached it Cleary tapped on the timbers and said something about a "nachelor calamity," and at the words a porthole opened and Jude's fresh young face appeared laughing, framed by the timbers of the wreck.

It seemed to him the most delightful vision—then it popped in and the porthole closed and Carquinez came riding up on a horse, saying he was going to "bu'st" the wreck open with dynamite to get at the treasure.

CHAPTER XV

UNDER WAY

HE was routed out before dawn by Satan. The cabin lamp was lit, the table spread, and Jude was bringing in coffee. She seemed in a bad temper, and as he huddled himself into his clothes he could hear her:

"Knockin' myself about in the dark! That old slush lamp in the galley don't burn worth a cent. What you want haulin' out this hour for?"

And to her Satan:

"Wind will be up with the sun—where's them biscuits? We've got to get the dinghy aboard yet, and all that raffle forward stowed, and it'll be light enough in another ten minutes."

"Where's Rat?"

"He's comin'."

He sat down to table opposite Jude. She scarcely gave him good morning. The face that had looked so well framed by the porthole of the dream ship was cross, almost sullen. He thought for a moment that her ill-temper was directed toward Satan as well as himself; then, in some subtle way, he knew it wasn't. Early rising may have helped; but he was the cause. What had he done? He could not think.

He remembered how she had acted when he had stood up for her the night before. It was just the same this morning.

Satan said the coffee was burnt,—tasted like bud barley, and ought to be slung in the slush tub. Ratcliffe stood up for the coffee, but was cut short by Jude.

"I reckon it's beastly," said Jude; "but I haven't more'n two hands to be gettin' the things on the table and the coffee boiled—and some folks snoring in their bunks!"

"Shet up!" said Satan, ruffled at this wanton attack on the guest. "And talkin' of snorin', I reckon you can give any man points and beat him, once you lay down to it. Why, you shake the ship so that I've woke often of nights thinkin' we'd got adrift and was dudderin' over sandbanks."

"Lord love you for a liar!" was all Jude said. She refused help in clearing away the things, joining them on deck a few minutes later, just as day was coming into the eastern sky.

The problem of how to get the dinghy aboard had not occurred to Ratcliffe till now. The *Sarah Tyler* possessed no davits, and though the old canvas boat was easy to handle as an umbrella, the sturdy little dinghy was a different matter.

Standing in the half-dark with a faint wind bringing the smell of the early morning sea, sharp as the smell of a new-drawn sword, he questioned Satan on the subject.

"Get her aboard?" said Satan. "Oh, I'll durn soon

get her aboard. Davits! God love you! what do you want them things for?"

"Except for hoistin' fools off the ship?" said the voice of Jude from the darkness. "Ain't you goin' to get a move on? You've got the old awning to take in and stow. Maybe you've forgotten it."

They got the awning down and stowed, and then, against a train of fire crawling on the eastern sea-line and in a light that made the world like the vestibule of Fairyland, Satan set to on the problem of the dinghy. He had no doubt half a dozen dodges for the purpose. The one he employed was simply to unshackle the main halyards and fix them to the ring-bolt on the bow.

As they hauled on the tackle, and as if in answer to the creak of block and shrill chantey started by Satan, the voices of the gulls blazed out. The deep-sea fishing gulls had long since started for sea; but the shore gulls, as though waiting for a convoy to follow, were round the stern of the *Sarah*. Then, the dinghy secured, the throat and peak halyards were manned, and the mainsail rose slatting against the splendor of the morning.

The sun was over the sea-line now, the wind rising to meet him, and to starboard the fresh blue sea flooding against the wind showed the *Natchez*, her canvas rising and the fellows swarming at the ropes.

Satan had unlashd the wheel and was standing by it, now that the mainsail was set, shouting directions to his crew; and to Ratcliffe, as he labored with Jude getting the foresail and jib on her, the truth came in a flash that this was the real thing. The lazy peace of the last

couple of days had broken all at once. Activity, Adventure, and Danger seemed suddenly to have boarded the old *Sarah Tyler* and delivered her as a prey to enormous and unknown forces.

He had never recognized till now the potential energy of canvas. The mainsail seemed horribly vast, out of all proportion to the hull; the slatting of the jib as they raised it spoke of an energy new born, viewless, and seeming to have little relationship to the warm and benign breeze.

But he had no time to think. The anchor was still to be had in, and as he helped with Jude at the windlass—Pap's patent that would have raised a battleship—the threshing of the canvas with all sheets slack and the voice of Satan came urging speed.

Then, when the old killick was aboard and the sails trimmed, came Peace. With the wind on the starboard beam and the canvas hard against the blue the *Sarah* settled down to her work, Palm Island fading to westward, and to sou'west the *Natches* with all sail set in pursuit.

Jude's bad temper seemed to have blown away on the wind, the surly look had gone from her face, and as she stood for a moment by Ratcliffe, looking over the weather rail, her mind seemed entirely occupied by Cleary.

"He's blowing along," said Jude; "but he's feeling our pace. Not more than holding his own—and he had the cheek to tell me once his old tub could sail circles round the *Sarah!*"

Satan at the wheel cocked his eye over his shoulder at the *Natches*, spat, and refixed his gaze on the binnacle.

"Where's your eyes?" asked Satan.

"In my head," replied Jude. "What you gettin' at?"

"He's overhaulin' us. Wonder he ain't aboard! Time you was gettin' that anchor up and handlin' the jib."

Ratcliffe was about to share the blame when, remembering the incident of the coffee, he checked himself and held his peace.

Satan was right. The *Natches* had the pace of the *Sarah*, at least under present wind conditions and under plain sail. The two boats had evidently never been matched before, and the gloom of the Tylers might have been gaged by their silence. Satan did not want to run away from Cleary; but he had promised him a "lead," and this impudent display of the better sailing qualities of the *Natches* was like a derisive underscore to the promise.

Cleary, in this matter at least, was a very unwise man. He should have checked the speed of his boat by mishandling her or even trailing a drogher. Instead of that he held on, determined, evidently, to take the shine out of the *Sarah* and pour derision on the head of Satan.

Ratcliffe, little as he knew of boatcraft, felt the situation. Being wise, he said nothing.

Suddenly Jude spoke.

"It's her beams helping her. Try her on a wind and we'd knock flinders out of her. Lord! to think of being beat by that old cod boat! Say, cayn't we do nothin', crack on a balloon jib or somethin'?"

Satan laughed a mirthless laugh.

"S'much as to tell the cuss we're beat. Don't you think Cleary's got no balloon jibs up his sleeve? Hain't you no sense?"

They held on, the *Natchez* steadily overhauling them till she was dead level half a mile away and drawing ahead.

Then, having demonstrated her superiority, she began to reduce sail so as to give the *Sarah* the lead.

Jude turned away and leaned with her back against the rail; then Satan told her to take the wheel and went below for a "wash."

CHAPTER XVI

THE STEERSMAN

RATCLIFFE, taking his seat on the bottom of the dinghy, watched her as she steered, the old panama on the back of her head and her eyes roving from the binnacle to the luff of the mainsail. The following wind blew warm, and the gentle creak of a block, the slash of the bow-wash, and the occasional click of the rudder chain were the only sounds in all the blue world ringing them.

A mile or more behind them the *Natches* showed, a triangle of pearl, Palm Island had vanished, and nothing remained in all the wheel of sea but a trace of smoke to the southward,—the smoke of some freighter hull down on the horizon.

The sturdy little figure at the wheel seemed to have forgotten his existence. He was wondering whether the grudge was still being kept up against him, and what it was all about, and whether this indifference was real or assumed, when a voice made him start:

“Say! Have you swallowed your tongue?”

“No, but I didn’t like to speak to you.”

“What for?”

"Well, I've heard you mustn't speak to the man at the wheel."

"Who stuffed you with that yarn?"

"Oh, I've seen it stuck up on steamboats, and besides I thought you were in a temper with me."

"Which way?"

"Well, you said davits were only good for hoisting fools off a ship."

"So they are."

"I thought you meant me."

"Thought you was a fool, did you?"

"Then last night you got in a wax—Jude."

"Yep."

"Nothing—only—we don't want to quarrel—and we haven't been the same since last night, somehow."

"Which way?"

"Oh, I don't know. You wouldn't let me help to clear the things this morning."

"Wouldn't I? Well, you can help to steer the ship now. Kin you steer?"

"Only a boat."

"Well, it's easy learnt, and you're not much use aboard unless you can take your hand at the wheel."

He said nothing for a minute, admiring the way she had steered clear of the subject he had started on.

"I don't mind," said he at last. "I'll learn some time—you can teach me."

Jude let her eyes rest on him. Then suddenly, and with the vehemence and force of a Methodist preacher driving home a point from the pulpit, she spoke:

"*Air* you stuck to the bottom of that dinghy with cobbler's wax?"

He laughed and stood up.

"That's right," said Jude. "Now come'n take the wheel. Some time's no time! You've got to learn to handle her now if you want to. Go behind me and look over my shoulder—that's right."

He stood behind her, wondering what the next command would be. It came almost at once.

"Stick your eye on the compass card."

"Right."

"S'long as the pointer's like that she's on her course. Now I'll let her off a spoke or two—keep your eye on the card."

The pointer altered its indication, and the mainsail seemed suddenly attacked by the ague.

"Now she's on her course again," said Jude, altering the wheel. "Take hold of her. I'll stand by to give you a hand if you want it."

He took the spokes she had been holding as she relinquished them, and the first sensation that came to him was the feeling that he had taken hold of something alive, something alive and sensitive as a hare. The wheel seemed to have a motive power and will of its own, and the infernal compass card to take affront at the least movement of the helm.

Jude rested her hand on his left hand to show him how and give him confidence, and at the touch of her firm little hand the stage-fright that comes to every steersman when he first takes the wheel left him.

In five minutes he had got the hang of the thing, or thought so.

"Can you run her alone?" asked Jude.

"Rather! It's as simple as simple."

"Right," said Jude.

She drew off and took her seat on the dinghy.

"Easy, ain't it?"

"Easy as pie."

The wind freshened a bit, and the *Sarah*, heeling slightly, took matters in her own hand for a moment and fell off her course. He put the wheel over too much, and like a frightened horse she went plunging away in the opposite direction, the wind spilling from her sails and the main boom threatening to swing to port.

In a moment Jude was beside him, her hands on the spokes, and the *Sarah* on her course again.

A voice came from below, where Satan, like a sensitive plant, had evidently felt the alteration in their course.

"What the —— are you doin' up there?"

"Learning Rat to steer," cried Jude.

Ratcliffe, himself again, retaking the wheel, turned to her.

"For God's sake," said he, "don't call me that!"

"Which?"

"Rat."

"For the land's sake what's the matter with it?"

"It's a beastly name. If you want something short, call me what everyone else calls me."

"What's that?"

"Bobby."

"You're lettin' her off again," said Jude. "Starboard—that's it. Here's Satan: he'll go on learnin' you. I'm goin' below for a wash."

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PART II



CHAPTER XVII

LONE REEF

IT was the morning of the third day out, somewhere about four o'clock. The moon had set, and the *Sarah* was lifting against a gentle head sea, boosting the foam from her bows under the light of a million stars.

Satan was at the wheel, Jude below in her hammock, and Ratcliffe at the weather rail, close to Satan. He was leaning over watching the water,—gouts and lines of star-shot foam, planes of ebony blackness, and now and then, deep down, the bloom of phosphorus like the life in the heart of a black opal.

"What time do you reckon we'll strike the reef?" asked Ratcliffe.

"We're right on to it now," replied Satan, "and if it wasn't more'n a five-knot breeze I'd heave her to."

"You aren't afraid of running on it?"

"Lord, no! There's no smell of it yet."

"You mean to say you could smell it?"

"Waal," said Satan, "I don't know if it's rightly smell or hearin' or what, but I'd know it, even with the wind as she is. I reckon it's maybe the water. Shoal water smells different from deep, and it's shoal water right up from four miles to Lone. Feels different too."

"How do you mean?"

"More choppy—I dunno—different. Jude would tell you the same. Pap had the sense of it too. Western ocean folks can smell ice miles off when the bergs are cruisin' about. I reckon it's the same thing— There's the sun."

Right ahead, as if touched by a wizard, the stars had faded above the sea line, the sky over there looked sick, a stain on the velvety splendor of the night.

A great gull passed the *Sarah*, flying topmast high, and now far off and as though coming through a pinhole could be heard a creaky lamentable sound,—the crying of gulls.

"I've got the smell of her now," said Satan. "Them gulls you're hearin' aren't all of them from Lone. There's a big spit to east'ard, and they'll be comin' up against the wind. Say, will you take a bet?"

"What sort?"

"I'll bet you even dollars Cleary hasn't held on same as we've done the last six hours. He was droppin' astern a long way last time I sighted him. He'll have seen the reef on the chart right ahead of him, and his navigation is no account: hasn't no sea sense. He'll be hove to singin' 'Lead, kindly light' and listenin' for the breakers— What you say?"

"I'd rather bet on the *Sarah*."

"Maybe you're right," said Satan.

The head sails showed hard now against the east, and almost before one could turn and look again the blaze had come above a band of opal-tinted mist which passed

and vanished, leaving on the horizon a train of fire pale as guinea gold.

In that moment, far ahead and as if suddenly sketched by a pencil against the eastern light, they saw the naked spars of a vessel anchored in the dawn.

"That's Cark," said Satan. "Told you we'd find him here—damn swab!"

"Well, I couldn't have believed it," said Ratcliffe. He remembered the sailing of the *Juan*, presumably for Havana, and though he had sized up Sellers and Carquinez for what they were worth, still, the evidence of their duplicity, here before his eyes, came as a shock.

In a moment it was blotted out by the sun, washed away in the blazing, seething ocean of light that sprang on them as if to the blast of a trumpet.

Satan swung his head over his shoulders. Ratcliffe followed his gaze. The sea to westward was empty, not a sign of a sail.

"Cleary's gone," said Ratcliffe.

"Oh, he'll be nosin' along soon," said Satan. "He's sure to come close enough to see Cark's topmasts, and then he'll pounce."

He put the helm over, and the *Sarah* payed off to the north so as to round the northern spur of the reef.

"That's the wreck," said Satan, "that line like a lump of rock."

Ratcliffe, shading his eyes, could now see the reef, long and foam-flecked, stretching from north to south, the line of rock absolutely unsuggestive of a wreck, beyond the reef the *Juan's* masts and spars, and about the reef-spurs

the gulls flitting and wheeling; but, despite the movement of the gulls and the splendor of the morning, the place struck him as the most desolate he had ever seen.

"Nothing stirring," said Satan, as they rounded the north spur and the boom came over. "Them lowsy Spaniards are all in their bunks. Rap on the deck for Jude. Hi, Jude, y'lazy dog, show a leg! What you doin'!"

"Comin'," cried a voice, followed by the sounds of thrashing about and inquiries of the Lord to know where her clothes were.

Then at the hatch appeared a face blind with sleep. She ran with Ratcliffe to get the lashings off the anchor, helped to let go the halyards, and as the anchor fell and the *Sarah* swung to her moorings a couple of cable lengths from and outside the *Juan*, down she sat on the deck like a person collapsing under a heavy load.

The sight of the *Juan* did not seem to move her at all. Like a dormouse suddenly electrified into life and movement, the stimulus withdrawn, the mechanism ceased to act. She yawned, turned on her side, and hid her face in the crook of her arm as if to shut out the sun. Satan, whistling between his teeth, stood with his hands on the rail looking at the *Juan*.

"They're wakin' up," said he.

A fellow with a red handkerchief round his head had appeared on deck. He came and looked over the side at the *Sarah*, then vanished.

"Gone to wake Cark out of his beauty sleep," said Satan. "Look! There's two more of them movin' about

like sick flies. Will you look at the way they've stowed them sails?—and they've got her a sight too close to the reef. Get a Western Ocean sea suddenly runnin' and the anchor to drag, where'd they be?"

He turned and contemplated the prostrate figure of Jude.

"There's another sleepin' beauty," said he. "Ought a be married to Cark. Well they'd look in the same hammock with Sellers fannin' the flies off them!"

The figure on the deck turned on its back, stretched out its arms, yawned, and then sat up holding its knees.

Youth may sneer at Age; but, anyhow, Age knows nothing of the weariness of Youth, of a morning.

Satan, satisfied with the semi-resurrection, dropped below, and promptly the figure fell on its back again with arms outspread.

"Get up!" said Ratcliffe.

"I'm getting— Say!"

"Yes."

"I—ow—yow—ain't it awful bein' tired?"

"You'll be all right when you're on your feet. Get up!"

"I'm getting— Say, d'you know where the fishing lines are? Starboard locker. Fetch'm up, an' that chunk of grouper I kep' for bait—in the tub."

"Right."

When he returned on deck she was drying her head in the sun, having soused it in a bucket of water.

Then they dropped a line.

Away through the diamond-clear water, thirty feet

down, they could see the slack of the anchor chain like a conger on the coral and sponge.

A nurse shark passed like a grisly ghost, then a shoal of sardines, then a young whip ray not bigger than a soup plate, then a mangrove schnapper that nosed the bait, swallowed it, and was hauled on board.

"He'll be enough," said Jude. "You clean him while I get the frying pan ready. Hullo! blest if Cark's not putting off a boat!"

A boat had been dropped on the starboard side of the *Juan* and was rounding her stern.

"That's Sellers," said Jude, shading her eyes. "Satan! Below there!"

"Hullo!"

"Sellers is coming off."

"I'll be up in a minute."

The boat came alongside, just as it had come at Palm Island,—same boat, same crew, Sellers just the same.

"Hullo, Kid!" cried Sellers.

"Hullo yourself! Thought you was gone to Havana."

"Thought you was to wait for us at Pa'm Island," said Sellers. "Hullo, Satan, that you? How about your contrac' with us?"

Satan, who had just come on deck, leaned over the rail and contemplated Sellers. Then he spoke.

"God A'mighty!" said Satan. He stared at Sellers for a moment as one might stare at a prodigy. Then he broke out:

"Contrac'! Holy George! *What* you say, contrac'?"

You daar to hook onto my channel plates, and I'll buzz this fish at y'r head! Shove off! What are you doin' here, anyway? Why aren't you at Havana gettin' the dynamite?"

"Why ain't you waitin' for us at Pa'm Island?" logically responded Sellers. "If you want to know why we're here, I'll tell you. It was a bet I had with Cark."

"Which way?"

"I bet him you'd never wait for us at Pa'm Island, but'd light out for here to raise the stuff if we went foolin' off to Havana. Seems I was right, don't it?"

The impudence of this made Ratcliffe gasp, but left Satan quite unmoved.

"S'pose we quit lyin'," said he.

"I'm willin' to follow soot," replied Sellers.

"Well, then," said Satan, "follow soot off to the wreck an' get your workin' party onto the business like hot nails. I'll be over to help you soon's we've had breakfast. You've no time to waste."

"How's that?"

"Cleary's after you."

This news seemed to take the wind out of Sellers. He sat for a moment without speaking.

"How do you know that?" asked he at length.

"He put into Palm Island not more'n four hours after you'd gone; said you and Cark had tricked him and he was after your blood. I told him that wasn't no concern of mine. He asked me had I seen you."

"What did you say?"

"The truth. Think I'd perjure me soul lyin' for the likes of you and Cark? Told him I was goin' to join you."

"*Sufferin'* Moses! You've put your hoof in it this time! Go on and don't stand waggin' your tail! What'd he say?"

"Nothin', didn't say nothin', but when I put out he put out after me."

"Followed you?"

"Yep. I only lost him last night; but it's ten to one he'll drop on us. He'll be bustin' everywhere round here."

"He will," said Sellers, "and then it's half shares he'll be wantin', not to mention Cark's liver. I'm sweatin'! Cark's let that chap down cruel. I owns it. Did it against my advice. Did he have many with him?"

"Reckon so. The old *Natches* was full as a beehive with the toughest-lookin' crowd."

The sight of Sellers' face at this announcement set Jude off. She seized the fish and started off to the galley with it, while Sellers, having communed with himself for a moment, spoke:

"Crooked's a bad course to run," said this moralist. "I've always told Cark so. I told you we'd no dynamite aboard,—neither we had,—but there's a keg of powder in the hold, and Cark reckoned to sample the goods without your help. There, it's out! You'd have had your share as long as I'd a leg to stand on, honest you would, s'far as I was concerned, and that's all I have to say pers'nally on the matter. What I'm gettin' at is this: If

Cleary turns up, there'll be hell of a rough-house. Will you stand for us if there's fightin' to be done?"

"That depends," said Satan.

"Which way?"

"I'm not trustin' you no more, not without the coin in my hand. Cark's got to plank down something on account, if it's no more'n a thousand dollars. If he don't, I'll put out for Havana and blow the gaff. You've overhauled the wreck?"

"Yep."

"Well, you can judge what the chances are. You hop back lively as a flea and tell Cark what I'm sayin'. Gold coin and right into my fist this mornin', or I'll give the show away. It's his own doin'. If he'd played straight with me, I'd have trusted him. Seein' he's played crooked, he'll have to pay. One thousand dollars, or I go back to Havana and you'll have a t'pedoboat on top of you, to say nothin' of Cleary!"

"I'll tell him," said Sellers. "Come over to the reef soon as you're ready and I'll give you word of what he says. I reckon it'll be all right. One thousand dollars?"

"Gold coin, and tell him it'll be double after eleven o'clock."

"Oh, he won't kick," said Sellers.

The boat shoved away.

Ratcliffe remembered what Satan had said about the chart and the hidden writing in it and the high probability that the bones of the *Nombre de Dios* were lying elsewhere than here. More than ever did it seem to him that Satan was the spider of this web,—not a malignant

spider, for the flies he was catching in the form of Carquinez and Sellers, and possibly Cleary, were the weavers of the web, in which they seemed tangling themselves. Satan only fell in with circumstance and took toll.

"Look here!" said he. "Suppose Carquinez pays you a thousand dollars' advance, and suppose you don't find any treasure, will you pay him back?"

"Why should I pay him back?" asked Satan. "I've given him the location, and that's worth a thousand anyway."

"But you said there was nothing on the chart, that it was a fake."

"Lord! I said no such thing. I said that in my 'pinion the stuff wasn't here; but I may be wrong. There's Jude hollering for us to come to breakfast. Come along down and I'll show you my meanin'."

He scarcely spoke during the meal, and when it was over he took the tobacco box from his pocket and opened the chart on the table.

"Now," said Satan, "I'll show you what I mean by sayin' the stuff may be here, but it's a big sight larger maybe it isn't. Don't crowd me. Stand behind me on either side and keep your eyes on the chart. Well, now, there's Lone Reef with the creek marked and the name of her, and there's Rum Cay to the left, and there's the latitude and longitude wrote up—all plain, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"Well, seein' Rum Cay is given, and seein' Lone Reef is down on all the charts and as well known as Cuba

to any sailor man, what did the man want stickin' the latitude and longitude down for? The chart's not a sailin' chart. A blind monkey wouldn't use it nor bother about examinin' the latitude and longitude wrote on it. He'd just say, 'Lone Reef is the place I want to get to,' and he'd get there with the ordinary ship's chart."

"Yes."

"Well," said Satan, "in my opinion the chap that sank the *Nombre de Dios* knew of the old wreck lyin' over there on Lone Reef and used it as a blind, for the latitude and longitude wrote there so faint that no man would bother to try to read it isn't the latitude and longitude of Lone Reef; it's a hundred and ten mile out. It's the latitude and longitude of Cormorant Cay, a blasted sandbank down to s'uthard, all shoals and gulls, and that's where the *Nombre de Dios* lies, in my 'pinion."

Ratcliffe whistled.

"Of course I may be wrong," said Satan, "there's no knowin'."

"I see what you mean," said Ratcliffe. "This chap reckoned that anyone finding or stealing the chart would take the latitude and longitude written there for granted as the latitude and longitude of Lone Reef, and not bother to examine the figures and verify them; having no cause, indeed, to do so, seeing Lone Reef is so well known and on all the charts."

"That's how it seems to me," said Satan. "I'm not sayin' I'm right, but that's how it seems to me, and if he figured that no one would trouble about readin' and verifyin' the latitude and longitude as given there he was

right. Pap didn't, and it was only by chance I did, a month ago."

"Have you seen Cormorant Cay?"

"Lord, yes! It's a lagoon sandspit, and the hooker may be in the lagoon for all I know, or under the sand for all I know, or I may be wrong all through and that may be her on the reef over there. Well, we've got to see; but it seems to me I'm pretty safe anyway, if I can touch Cark for that thousand."

So thought Ratcliffe.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE WRECK

AFTER breakfast, leaving Jude to keep ship, they got the dinghy overboard and rowed for the reef. Here to eastward the landing was made easy by a scrap of beach a hundred yards long, where the boat of the *Natches* was lying, having landed Sellers and his working party.

Satan, scrambling, led the way over the rocks to the central creek between the two reef arms, where, ponded round with water, lay the wreck.

The reef, seen from the deck of the *Sarah*, showed little sign of a wreck. One had to land on it to discover that the long hogback of rock rising from the creek had structure. There was not even the indication of where a mast had been, bowsprit there was none, stem and stern were almost indistinguishable; yet, standing there, with the gulls flying round him and the lonely tune of the sea in his ears, Ratcliffe knew that the thing he was gazing upon was a ship. Structure speaks! You can destroy it, but can scarcely disguise it.

Between the right arm of the reef and the starboard bow of the hulk a ridge of rock gave access to the deck.

and as the others crossed over he took his seat to rest for a moment and contemplate the thing before him.

To see the Sphinx properly, one should visit it alone, and so with the great wreck of the *Nombre de Dios*,—if that were its name,—crouching here, camouflaged with rock-growth and weed, swollen, sinister in the blazing sunlight, and sung to by the chime and gurgle of the sea.

Sunk in shallow water,—so the tale ran,—raised by that alteration in level constantly in progress among the reefs and islands, freighted with treasure, and guilty of the death of many a man—well, the tale here rang true. On board the *Sarah* one might doubt, but here, even in face of that chart which seemed faked, one believed,—mainly, perhaps, because one wanted to believe.

Here, sitting on the reef, one became part of the story, just as when the lights of the theater are lowered one becomes part of the play. The flower-blue sky, the sapphire sea, the tepid wind, the shouting gulls, all became confederates. One saw, in the far past, the *Nombre de Dios* setting sail,—the tragic figure of Lopez on her quarterdeck; the sinking of her in shallow, reef-strewn water; the escape in the boats; men dying of starvation; the lapse of years; Lopez dying with her secret still hidden; and Lone Reef rising still higher out of the sea to expose more fully the murdered ship.

The reef had always been here, for it was down in the oldest charts. Had it really risen? Was that chart, as Satan supposed, a lie?

According to Sellers' story, the *Nombre de Dios* had been sunk in six-fathom water, thirty-six-foot. Well,

if that was so, Satan was right, for the highest point of the reef was only six feet above water, and when she was sunk the reef would have been thirty feet under water and so uncharted.

There was the chance that Lopez might have sailed her into the creek, deeper in those days, and that the creek bottom might have raised itself to its present level, the reef remaining the same. This seemed unlikely.

And yet the decks must have been under water once, to account for the old coral deposits.

It was low tide in the creek now: high-tide mark was six feet below the deck level. He tried to calculate how far she must have been lifted, gave up the attempt, and, rising, crossed by the rock bridge to her deck.

This bridge of rock was another factor in the insoluble problem. It seemed placed there by some marine architect without reason, built up out of huge fragments as if from some fallen peak or spire.

"Step careful!" shouted Satan.

The warning came just in time, for the deck was slippery as ice in patches where a thin moss had grown,—a gray, greasy moss, treacherous as Death, and covering the droppings of innumerable sea birds.

He made his way aft, where Sellers was standing with Satan and the half-dozen Spaniards that formed the working party. Drills and picks lay about, and marks showed where work had been started the day before.

"It's a foot thick," said Sellers, "whatever it is, and harder than cement. Rock!—this ain't coral rock, not such as I've ever seen. Harveyized steel's more like it,

and after that there's the deck planking to be got through."

"Well," said Satan, "I told you it was a dynamite job, and if you'd played fair and got the stuff we'd have been a long sight nearer the end of the business, even if we started a week later. But there's no use in talkin' now, and there's no use in messin' about pickin' holes here and there. Your job is to make a hole big enough to sink that barrel of powder of yours—take me? Sink it half deep and then lay a fuse and fire the whole lot at once and risk chances. It's ten to one you'll split the deck right open at one go. As for sinkin' little holes and usin' small charges, you'll be ten years on the job."

Sellers rose up and wiped his brow and cast his eyes over the sea to westward, evidently with Cleary in his mind.

"Well, I'm not sure you aren't right," said he. "I'll fix it that way; but it'll be a long job with the tools we have."

"Maybe," said Satan. "And now to the question of them dollars."

"Oh, them—I've spoke to Cark, and he's agreeable."

"Oh, is he? Well, then, I'll go right aboard with you now while he's warm and get them dollars into my hand. Set your men at work and you come along with me."

Sellers hung fire for a moment, then he agreed, gave the working party their directions, and led the way off the deck across the rock bridge.

He pushed off with Satan in the boat of the *Juan*.

Satan asked Ratcliffe to take the dinghy back to the *Sarah*.

"You won't want to be hangin' about the reef," said Satan; "you'll be more comfortable aboard ship. And tell Jude to be sure and wash that old jumper I left on the rail. She's forgot it, for there it's hangin' still."

"Right," said Ratcliffe.

CHAPTER XIX

MUTINY

AS he sculled up alongside the *Sarah* there was no sign of Jude. He tied up the boat and came over the rail.

"Jude, where are you?"

"What you want?" came a surly voice from below. She was in the "saloon," for he could hear her moving about.

"You."

"Well, you kin go on wantin'. I'm sick!"

"What on earth's the matter with you?"

Pause—then the voice came again mixed with sounds as of plates being put away.

"I'm sick of the hull of this crowd—washing up and cooking and you two playin' about!"

"Come up on deck."

"Sha'n't! I'm going to scatter—soon's I've finished clearing away. Life of a dog!" indistinct grumbles tailing away into silence.

He lit a pipe and waited.

Presently the companionway creaked and a head appeared at the cabin hatch. He said nothing while the whole body emerged, stood erect on the deck, and shaded

its eyes toward the *Juan*. Then, still speechless, it leaned on the rail, looking toward the reef and apparently lost in thought.

The sleeves of the guernsey were rolled up to mid-arm, ill temper seemed to have vanished and to have been replaced by sudden laziness, and as she lolled, kicking up a bare heel, she whistled.

She seemed utterly unconscious of his presence—or pretending to be. Then her eyes fell to the water alongside and the dinghy. The whistling ceased and her face turned to him.

"Say," said Jude, "where did you learn to tie up boats?"

He came beside her.

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing at present, but give her half an hour and she'd work herself free of that tom-fool knot."

"I'll go down and retie it."

"No use in troubling, I'm going off in her in a minute, and she'll hang there till I'm ready."

"Where are you going?"

"Never *you* mind! You've been playing about on the reef, and you've got to stick here now and boil the potatoes! Me alone here all the morning!"

"Why, I wasn't more than an hour on the reef—and I never knew you wanted to go. If I had, I shouldn't have gone, honestly I shouldn't."

Jude contemplated him a moment with a more friendly face.

"Well," said she, "I'm going, anyhow."

"But where to?"

"Gulls-nesting."

"On the reef?"

"Lord, no! To the spit away there to east'ard. You can't see it: it's near seven mile away."

"But you can't row there alone."

"Can't I? You bet I can, there and back by sun-down!"

"But what will Satan say?"

Jude laughed. "He'll be wild—that's what I want to make him. I'll learn him! Him and his jumpers!"

She took the jumper off the rail, rolled it up and threw it on the deck, then she dived below and reappeared with a water jar and some provisions done up in a bundle. She had evidently been making her preparations.

"Look here!" said Ratcliffe. "If you're going, I'll go too."

"No, you won't!" said Jude. "You've got to stick here and look after the ship—and see how you like it."

"Not I—I couldn't face Satan; besides, if you want to make him wild really, he'll be twice as wild if we both go; besides, I'm sick of the ship. Come on: I've never been gulls-nesting."

Jude, evidently weakening, put down her bundle.

"Well, there ain't enough grub for two," she complained. "I reckon there's enough water, though."

"Well, get some more grub."

She cast her eyes about in indecision, now at Ratcliffe, now at the *Juan*, then, with one of those sudden changes

so indicative of her, she made up her mind and dived below.

Five minutes later she reappeared with another small bundle.

Ratcliffe, during her absence, had torn the back off an old letter. He had a pencil in his pocket, and, scrawling "gone gulls-nesting on the sandspit" on the paper, stuck the missive to the mast with his penknife.

Then, bundling the food and the water jar into the dinghy, they started.

He took the sculls at first, Jude steering, her eyes fixed ahead under the shade of her old panama. She could tell exactly the spot where the spit lay. She could not see it, but she could see in the sky now and then over there a faint trace like a haze of smoke that formed, vanished and reformed,—gulls.

Occasionally she looked back where the deserted *Sarah Tyler* lay, with the *Juan* seeming now close beside her and the reef behind them. Smaller and smaller they grew and more vast the ocean, an infinity of blazing lazulite, without horizon, silent, but sonorous with light.

The current was with them.

Satan had made a small mast and lug sail for the dinghy. That was the job he had been engaged on while Jude and Ratcliffe had landed on Palm Island to get provisions from the cache. He had worked with all the care of a fond mother making a garment for a beloved child. The little mast, scraped and varnished, the sail made of an extra special bit of stuff wheedled from

Thelussou, were in the boat, and, a breeze now springing up from the sou'west, Jude gave orders to step the mast. Then she took the sheet, he slipped from his seat to the bottom of the boat, and the dinghy, bending to the three-knot breeze, lifted to the gentle swell.

A great herring hog passed them, plunging like a dolphin, and a flying fish with blind, staring eyes missed the sail by a hand's breadth and flickered into the sea ahead; then a strange-looking gull swooped toward them from nowhere, hung for a moment with domed wings, honey-colored against the sun, and passed with a cry into the great silence, a silence broken only by the slap and tinkle of the water against the planking.

Ratcliffe lit his pipe. Jude, steering, seemed to have forgotten her last trace of grudge against him, forgotten Satan and the jumper and the fact that she had been left to her lonesome while they had been playing on the reef and her desire to cut the whole show and start a "la'ndry." She seemed just now a different person, companionable and friendly and sane, as though the cooking and cleaning and the worries and troubles of the *Sarah* had been lifted like a dish-cover from her prisoned soul.

It was the first time they had been really alone together, and the companionship that springs from loneliness helped.

The gull reminded her of gulls she had seen on the Louisiana coast where the cypress swamps come down to meet the sea and you could hear "the bullfrogs shoutin' all night, 'Paddy got drunk, Paddy got drunk, Paddy got drunk,' and the other chaps answering up, 'Bottle of

rum, bottle of rum, bottle of rum,' and the 'gaters would come alongside grinding against the planking sniffing for bits—ever seen a 'gater?'"

"Only stuffed."

"Which way?"

"Oh, in museums and places."

"What's them?" asked Jude.

"Oh, places where they keep stuffed birds and animals."

"Git a bit more to sta'board to trim the boat; *sta'*board I said, not port! And what in the nation do they want keeping them things for?"

"Jude," said he lazily.

"What?"

"This is the jolliest time I ever spent. I've never felt free before till just now. I'd like to go sailing round and round the world in this little dinghy and forget civilization. That's the place where they keep stuffed birds to look at, and stuffed animals in museums, and where the men and women are stuffed idiots. Do you remember the morning I came on board the *Sarah* first?"

"Them pajamas!"

"Yes, them pajamas. Only for them you wouldn't have laughed at me, and if you hadn't laughed at me I shouldn't have come aboard, perhaps."

"Oh, yes, you would."

"Why?"

"Satan wanted you."

"Oh, did he? Bless Satan!—he made me young again."

"Lord! you ain't so old as all that."

"I'm over twenty-one—and you're only—"

"Raisin' sixteen," said Jude, with steady eyes fixed ahead where the gulls above the spit were now well visible.

He refilled and lit his pipe, bending under the gunnel.

"You're mighty fond of that old pipe," said Jude.

"Have a whiff?"

"Not me! I had half a cigar once; Dirk Peterson dared me. It was one of them wheelings, black, slick-lookin' cigars. He and me an' another boy'd gone to look at the nigger girls bathin' and clod them—"

"Where on earth was that?"

"Vera Cruz."

"Oh, and who was Dirk Peterson?"

"Son of an old feller that run a dridger in the harbor, Yankee, half-Dutch, hadn't only one eye, and wasn't more'n eleven, biggest liar from here to C'necticut. His face was all chawed up, and he said he'd got it like that and lost his eye fightin' with a tiger. Confl'ent small-pox was what had done him, so Pap said; but the boys believed him till that day I was telling you of, he fetched out a half cigar he'd stole or picked up somewhere and a box of waxios and dared me smoke her—and I lit her up, like a durned fool!"

"What happened then?"

"Oh, lots of things," said Jude. "First of all the harbor begun spinnin', and then it went on till two ticks more I'd have been inside out, when Dirk shouts to some chaps to come an' look at Jonah tryin' to bring up the whale. That got my goat, and I laid for him by the

foot and brought him down and near beat the head off him. Then I got sick on him again, and he run home to his mother, with all the fellers after him wantin' to know about that tiger."

"He couldn't fight?"

"N'more than a jewfish."

"Have you had many fights with boys?"

"Not me—not with Satan handy to do the fighting. I'd only to say to one, 'You touch me and I'll put Satan on you,' and he'd shrivel."

"Well, I shouldn't care to tackle Satan myself," admitted Ratcliffe. "And Sellers seemed to think a lot of him that way, for I heard him asking if he'd stand by if Cleary showed fight."

"Garn!" said Jude. "Cleary—he's no good; Sellers is no good, neither. There's not a man in these seas nowadays that's got the fight of a tomcat in him. That's what Pap used to say. He was great on old times, and used to string off yarns about the pirates and the high doin's there used to be, and he said we were nothing but a lot of scowbankers now—and that's the truth! If Cleary comes up with Cark, they'll be shaking hands and kissing one another, feeling in each other's pockets all the time to see if they can't steal five cents. In the old days they'd have been cutting each other's throats."

"Would you like to be a pirate, Jude?"

"You bet!"

"Murdering people?"

"Oh, ask me another."

"How'd you like to kiss Cark?"

"How'd you? Hear the gulls!"

The crying of the gulls above the spit was coming up against the wind, a lamentable sound across the lone blue sea.

"We're not more'n a mile away," said the steersman. "You can get a sight of the spit if you raise yourself. That's it, the white line runnin' north and south; but the gulls don't seem to be as many as they used to be a year ago. It's a bit early for the full laying season, but there's sure to be turkles' eggs. Better get your shoes and stockin's off and roll up your pants, for it's shallow beaching and we'll have to run her up."

"Won't you take down the sail and row her in?"

"Not me. There's no sea on and I'll run her up as she is."

They held on, the gulls shouting over them now, and the sigh of the sandspit, fuming to the lazy sea, in their ears. It was full tide, and as the keel touched the sand, letting the sheet go and the sail to flog in the wind, they tumbled over and dragged the little boat high and dry.

Then Jude took down the sail.

"You aren't hungry yet?" said Jude.

"No; are you?"

"Well, I can wait. We'll leave the grub and the water jar in the boat and cover them with the sail,—keep the sun off. Lend's a hand."

They covered the provisions, hauled the boat up another foot or two to make sure, and, that done, Ratcliffe looked around him.

CHAPTER XX

THE SANDSPIT

THAT was one of the strangest moments in his life. He had never seen anything comparable to this long white street of sand curbed with emerald waves, leading nowhere, lost, useless, desolate, brilliant with a brilliance that hit the heart as well as the eye, flown over by the white gulls.

The sands fizzed to the sea wind, and away to north and south they trembled and waved in the heat; but the curious thing was the fact that, despite their loneliness, one did not feel alone. The place seemed populous, filled with a crowd that for a moment had made itself invisible. Perhaps it was the riot of color and the brilliance of light: the effect remained.

Jude, looking round, seemed preoccupied about something. It was the absence of gulls.

"Last time I was here," said Jude, "it was all over gulls' nests, right here in the middle. Now they seem to have gone off to the ends. Wonder what's come to them?"

"Maybe it's too early for them."

"It's a bit early, but not much: there's always early breeders. No, they've just took their hook—gulls are

like that. We'll have to go and hunt at the ends. You go north and I'll go south."

"Well," said he, "it's an awfully long way. Suppose we have something to eat first?"

"I don't mind," said Jude.

They got the provisions and water jar from the boat and sat down on the sands. It was past noon and cooler, for the breeze had livened up, the outgoing tide was leaving a strip of wet sand glittering like a golden sword, and the fume of beach filled the air resonant with the gentle rhythm of the waves.

They ate, leaning on their sides like old Athenians. They had no cup; so they took it in turns to drink from the water jar. Then he lit a pipe.

"This is jolly," said he.

"Ain't bad," said Jude.

She made a pillow of sand for her head, and then, on her back with her head on the pillow, lay like a starfish, spread-eagled, her hat over her eyes.

He followed suit.

"How about those gulls' nests?" he asked.

"Which ones?" evaded Jude.

"The ones you were going to hunt for?"

"Oh, them? Well, I reckon there's dead loads of time."

"Lots—listen to the sand!"

"It's the wind blowing it."

"I know. All the same this is a rum place. Do you know when we landed here, just now, the first thing that struck me?"

"Naw."

"Well, I felt as if the place was full of people."

"Which way?"

"Oh, I don't know; people I couldn't see, ghosts."

"Hants?"

"Yes."

"What made y' think that?"

"Oh, I don't know. Somehow it reminded me of a story I'd once read."

"What was the story?"

"About a beach over in the Pacific where wizards used to go and pick up shells."

"What's them?"

"Chaps that work magic and sell themselves to the devil. They can make themselves invisible so's you can't see them, and they used to come to the beach and pick up shells, and then turn the shells into silver dollars. You couldn't see them, but you could hear them rustling about, like that sand, and talking to one another, and now and then you'd see a little fire blaze up."

Jude, interested, rolled over, rested her chin in her palms, and kicked a bare heel to the sun.

"I reckon you're not far wrong," said Jude.

"How?"

"Well, I've felt the same way here myself, as if there was hants about and if you'd turn your head sharp you'd see someone behind you. Now you've talked of it, I'll be always thinking it if I come here again. Wish you'd kept your head shut."

She sat up and looked about her.

"Sorry," said Ratcliffe, raising himself on his arm; "but if you come again I'll come with you, and that'll keep the hants off—unless I'm gone."

"How d'you mean?"

"Well, when this cruise is over I'll have to leave you both and go home. I don't want to go."

Jude said nothing. Staring over the sea under the brim of her hat, she did not seem to have heard him.

"I'd much sooner stick on here with you and Satan. What's that thing floating out there?"

"Turkle," said Jude. "Look, he's doing a dive!"

He sat up beside her.

"So he has. Well, he's gone." He sat with his knees up, looking over the sea.

Alone here with Jude she seemed a different person from what she had been aboard the *Sarah*. The strange antagonism she had suddenly exhibited, and a trace of which had remained up till this morning, seemed to have utterly vanished. Perhaps it was the "hants," or the loneliness, or a combination of both, but she seemed subdued.

"Well, I don't see what you want going for if you don't want to," suddenly said Jude, drawing up her knees and crossing them with her hands.

"Oh, bother!" said he. "Don't let's think of it; besides, we'll fix up something. I don't want to go. I've never had such a jolly time in my life, and I'm not going to lose sight of you and Satan—unless you want to."

"Lord! I don't want to."

"Well, that's all right. We'll stick together, somehow, and let the old world go hang, and we'll go hunting abalones and fishing—let's make plans."

His arm somehow slipped round her waist, half automatically, just as one puts one's hand on a person's shoulder. When he realized what he had done, he realized, at the same time, that she did not seem to mind; more than that, she reciprocated in a way by letting her shoulder rest more comfortably against his. It was companionship, pure and simple, and her mind seemed far away, wrapped in the sun-blaze as with a garment, and wandering—who knows where?

"Heave ahead," said Jude drowsily. "What's your plans?"

"Plans—oh, I've lots. Let's go round the world in the old *Sarah*—get a couple more hands."

"Where'd you stick them?"

"Well, you've got a foc's'le."

"Not big enough for a tomcat. The nigger filled it. He said he reckoned he'd got to stick his head through the hatch to breathe."

"Well, we'll get rid of the *Sarah* and get a bigger boat."

"Lord! Don't you never let Satan hear you say that: she's his skin!"

"We'll do without extra hands, then, and work her, the three of us. I can steer all right now."

"Kin you?"

"You know jolly well I can!"

"What's the points of the compass? Run 'em off."

"North—nor'-nor' east, nor' east—um—"

Jude chuckled subduedly.

"Heave ahead!"

"I've forgotten."

"Never knew."

"Well, maybe."

The confiding shoulder rested more heavily against him as against a cushion and she began to hum a tune. She seemed to have forgotten the points of the compass, him, everything, just as a child suddenly forgets everything in day-dream land.

The absolute contentment of doing nothing, resting, listening to the waves, had fallen upon him too, with a something else, a sort of mesmerism born of his companion, the strangest feeling as though Jude were a part of himself, as though he had put his arm round his own waist and a new self,—a much pleasanter self than the old one, less stiff, more human, and somehow more alive.

The metronomic rhythm of the little waves falling on the sand seemed to mix his thoughts together and blur them; but he saw Skelton, Sir William Skelton, Bart., he saw a girl he, Ratcliffe, had been engaged to, he saw all sorts of men and all sorts of women, everyone he had ever known, it seemed to him, in a nebulous cluster, and they all seemed, somehow, not quite alive,—not dead, but sleeping in the trance we call civilization, their days ordered by the beat of a metronome,—get up—wash—dress—eat—work or play—eat—work or play—eat—work or play—bed—sleep—get up—wash—dress—etc.,—all the figures moving like one, their very laughter and

tears ordered except when they got drunk or went mad.

It seemed to him that vivid life was not so much a question of vitality as of freedom.

Was that the secret Satan had discovered,—Satan, who had no hankering after great riches, but was free as a gull? Satan and Jude were gulls,—seagulls, untamable as seagulls and as far from civilization! It was as though his arm were round a bird,—quiescent by some miracle and allowing him to handle it, and imparting to him, somehow, the knowledge of its vitality,—the vitality of freedom.

“What I like about the old *Sarah*,” said he, “is the way she just pots about—with nothing to do.”

“Nothing to do!”

“Well, you and Satan can take things easy.”

“Oh, can we? That’s news—what d’you call easy?”

“You have no fixed work, you can knock off when you like, you haven’t to carry cargo, or be bothered with owners, or be up to time. You are as free as the gulls.”

Jude took his hand and removed his arm from around her waist just as one removes a belt. She wanted to shift her position. She seemed to have lost interest in the conversation. Sand had got between her toes, and she removed it, running her finger between them. She had no handkerchief,—never used one or needed to use one: the perfectly healthy animal never does.

Then, crossing her legs like a tailor and squatting in front of him, she dived into the right hand pocket of her trousers and produced a dollar, a slick, evil, suspicious-looking dollar. She seemed utterly to have for-

gotten the gulls'-nesting business and how the time was running on, and having little passion for the business he was content not to remind her.

"I'll match you for dollars," said Jude. She was no longer the person of a moment ago. She was the harbor larrikin, the clodder of bathing nigger girls, a person to be avoided by pious boys with possessions in the form of money or kind.

The coin spun in the air.

"Tails is the bird," cried Jude.

"Heads, then."

"Tails! Y'owe me a dollar."

It spun again.

"Heads! We're quits. Heads again, heads—oh, hell! —what you want sticking to heads for? That's two dollars I owe you. Tails—scrumps! that's three! Tails again, that's four. What you want sticking to tails for? Why don't you wabble about an' give a body a chance? Heads—holy Mike! What's wrong with the durned thing? Five dollars gone on a bang!"

"We're not playing right," said he. "We should call alternately."

"What's that?"

"One after the other."

"I'm not going to play any more," said Jude. "I'm broke. The bank's bust and I kin't pay you, not till I get to Havana—unless I play you double or quits. You call; I'll toss."

"Heads."

She sent the coin six feet high and it fell on the sand—heads!

"That settles it," said Jude. "Ten dollars I owe you. You'll have to wait till we get to Havana, for if Satan knew I was tossing for coins he'd sculp me. I can get some money out of the bank at Havana, pretending it's for something else. I haven't a cent, an' this old dollar's no use: it's a dud."

"You don't owe me anything," said Ratcliffe. "We were only tossing for fun." The words were no sooner out of his mouth than he regretted them.

Jude flushed red under her freckles and sunburn.

"I'm not taking your money, thank you," said she; then breaking out, "What the blizzard d'you think we've been playing at, and what you take me for? S'posin' I'd won, you'd a paid, wouldn't you?"

"I didn't mean anything," said he.

"Y'shouldn't have said it, then," said she.

"Well, I'm sorry—I take it back."

She played with the dud dollar for a moment, tossing it, and catching it; then she put it into her pocket, uncrossed her legs, and lay flat, her chin resting on the back of her hands.

Her hat was off, lying beside her, and the quarrel with him was evidently over; she seemed plunged in reverie. Then he noticed that the eyes, upturned under their lashes, were steadfastly looking at him. Instantly they fell, and her position altered so that her face was hidden on her arm.

He lit his pipe and smoked for a moment in silence.

"Jude!"

No answer.

"What's the matter with you?"

Silence. He remembered how she had shammed dead on Palm Island, put down his pipe, and crawled toward the corpse. It was rigid, and to revive it he began to pour sand on its head.

"Quit fooling," grumbled a voice; then, as if the sand had suddenly revived memory and galvanized her to life, she scrambled to her feet.

"Them eggs—and the sun's getting down and we fooling about!" She picked up her hat. "I'll take this end and you go t'other."

"But I haven't anything to gather them in."

"Gather them in your hat, and keep a lookout for quicksan's. If you get into one, holler and throw yourself on your back. But you'll easy tell them—they look different from the or'nary sands."

"How?"

"I dunno; just different. If you see the sand in front of you looking different, keep clear of it."

Off she went.

CHAPTER XXI

DISHED

HE struck to the north. Over there in the north the sea was of a violet blue accentuated by the white blaze of the sands.

The sands, once one got moving on them, were full of interest, strewn along the sea-edge with all sorts of prizes,—colored shells, cuttlefish bones, extraordinary seaweeds, bits of wreckage; a few yards out a nautilus fleet was steering, with tiny sails set to the wind, the oldest ships that ever floated on the sea, unspoiled by storm and time, just as they were launched in the morning of the world. He watched them for awhile, forgetful of gulls' eggs, or quicksands, or the sun, now sensibly declining.

If ever things had purpose, these had. They were going somewhere, bound on some business, keeping formation, and possessed of charts and compasses and barometers as surely as of sails. They made him think of God, and then they made him think of Satan,—Satan, whose sea sense served him better than all precise knowledge.

Then he remembered Jude and glanced back. Away, far away to the south, he saw her. The sands dipped

and rose there, and sometimes she was invisible and his heart thumped to the idea that a quicksand had taken her, then she reappeared and he went on, and, ever as he went, he seemed walking deeper into loneliness, peopled with viewless things and half-heard voices.

Sometimes a chiming sound like the shattered and mingled voices of distant bells filled the air,—it was the singing of the sands. He had not noticed it in company with Jude, but here alone he noticed it. Sometimes laughter, far away in the distance, came distinct, human, and startling,—it was the calling of a laughing gull,—and always, penetrating all other sounds with the subtlety of osmosis, the silky, sinister whisper of the wind playing with the sand-grains. He went on. Something nearly tripped him. It was a great spar, half sanded over, the relic of some ship that had come to grief, maybe, on the spit.

The sight of this spar touched everything with a new and momentary color. "Gascoign, the Sandal Wood Trader," and other old stories he had read in his boyhood came back to him half-remembered, and with them came a whiff from a world he had half-forgotten,—a breath of the air we breathe at fifteen.

He saw to his satisfaction that the gulls were beyond his reach, a broad channel of water cutting the spit in two right ahead. He took his seat on the spar for a moment to rest and look about, and as he sat the gulls, wheeling and crying, kept up around him the elusive atmosphere of storyland.

All the money in the world could not have brought

him that! Nor could he have found it had he landed here from a yacht with grown-up companions.

He fell to thinking what an extraordinarily lucky person he was, and to plume himself on his instinctive wisdom in dropping Skelton and civilization for Jude and Satan, who had led him into a world of things he had never seen, things he had never imagined, things he had half-forgotten.

Carquinez alone was a revelation, to say nothing of Sellers and Cleary. There was only one cloud, smaller than a man's hand; but there!—where was it to end? It was all very well talking to Jude about sailing round the world: you can't sail out of Time, and the time would come—the time would come—

Jude was winding threads round him as a silkworm winds a cocoon,—tiny threads but deathly strong. It was almost as though she were becoming part of himself,—part of himself and part the sun and freedom and blue sea. She seemed half built up of those things and to have the power to make him one with them. Well, there was no use in bothering. So he said to himself, and as he said it the cloud no larger than a man's hand swelled and twisted and rolled across the sandspit before him, resolving itself into a troupe of female relations, male relations, friends,—people as remote from Satan and Jude as parrots from seagulls, caged parrots content in the great gilded cage of convention.

What would they say about Jude? He had an instinctive knowledge of what Jude would say about them, if they ever met, which seemed impossible.

Then came the weird recollection that they had, in a way, actually met. She had met Skelton, the high priest of the whole crowd, Sir William Skelton, Bart. Old Popplecock was the label she had affixed to him, and it somehow stuck and fitted. What label would she affix to his aunts, his two maiden mid-Victorian aunts, should she ever meet them?

A faint halloo from the south sent aunts and all other considerations flying. He turned. Jude, far away on the sands, was coming toward the dinghy. She was carrying something and running as if pursued; then he saw her trip and fall.

She was on her feet in a second, and the thing pursuing her had evidently given up the hunt, for she stood examining something she had picked up from the ground, and seemed regardless of everything else.

He waited for her by the boat, and as she came up he guessed the tragedy. She had been carrying a hatful of birds' eggs and had smashed them when she fell. The hat was eloquent.

"Smashed them every one," said Jude, wading out and beginning to wash the hat. "All your fault!"

"My fault! For heaven's sake how?"

"Stuffing me up with them yarns."

"What yarns?"

"Hants."

"Was that what made you run?"

"Who was running?"

"You were."

"Oh, was I? Reckon you'd have run too."

"Did you see anything?"

"Yep."

"What was it?"

"You never mind."

She was evidently in a vile, bad temper; so he took his seat on the sand waiting for her to cool. Then, hat in hand, she came and sat close beside him, more out of a desire for company than friendship, he imagined; then, placing the hat to dry, she began examining the sole of her right foot, spreading the toes apart and brushing off the sand.

"Well, I'm awfully sorry," said he at length. "But tell us—what was it you saw, really?"

"A wuzzard."

"What was it like?"

"Nothin'," then suddenly, and as if unburdening her soul, "I hadn't more'n got the last of the eggs when I turned and saw him walking on the sands,—little old man with a glass under his arm, dressed queer in a long coat, an' a hat on his head like an I dunno what. I wasn't afraid, thought he was real, and he stuck the glass to his eye 'sif he was looking out for a ship."

"Yes."

"Then he went out—puff—like the sniff of a candle—hu—hu—" She clung to him.

"It was all my fault," said he, "talking that nonsense. Don't think of it: it was only an optical illusion."

"He didn't cast a shadow—I remember now."

"That proves it. I've often heard cases like that. Sir Walter Scott saw a man like that once, and he knew

it was only an illusion. He had some wine handy and he drank a glass of it, and the thing disappeared."

"I reckon I'd have drunk a barrel of rum if I'd had one handy," said Jude, drawing away a bit. "Let's get off. Lord! Look at the sun—it's half down. Come'n help with the boat."

They got up, and taking the dinghy by the gunnels began to haul her to the water. They had not got her more than a couple of yards when Jude straightened up as though remembering something and clapped her hand to her head.

"We're dished!" said Jude.

CHAPTER XXII

THE CRABS

“**H**OW do you mean?” said he.

She explained. It was like her to forget and spend the precious time lazing and playing about with “wuzzards.” The sun was taking his plunge into the sea, darkness was upon them, and she could not find her way back in the dark. Moon or starlight would be of no use. The thriddy spars of the *Sarah* and *Juan*, invisible from the sandspit even in daylight, would be picked up only several miles out. She could not steer by the stars, and there was a great sweep of current setting sou’east which might take them to Timbuktu. Satan would have done the business right enough blindfolded; but she was a night-funk, she confessed it. Night put her all abroad and mixed up everything in her mind so that front seemed back and west seemed east, besides filling the world with “hants.” She had “near died” of fright fetching that sack from the cache the other night.

All this in a lugubrious voice not far from tears, as they stood facing each other, and lit by the remorselessly setting sun.

“All right,” said Ratcliffe. “Cheer up. We’ll just have to stick here till daybreak. We have some grub

left and lots of water. No use pulling the boat farther down. But I expect Satan will be in a stew."

"I reckon he'll know," said Jude. "The weather's all right. He'd scent if we were in any trouble, and he'd borrow Cark's boat to hunt for us."

"How do you mean 'scent'?"

"He'd smell trouble; he's awful sharp."

"Sort of telepathy."

"Which?"

"Mind reading."

"I dunno, but I reckon he's not worrying, and if he was he'd be alongside here pronto."

Her face was like a buttercup in the extraordinary light of that sunset. The whole sky was buttercup color; the great sea was seething round the great sun, now half-gone, churning and washing round him, a blazing globe sinking in boiling gold.

Golden gulls, golden sky, golden sea,—all fading at last, the purple of night breaking through, rushing dark from the west across the sea.

The shipwrecked mariners lost their golden faces and hands, and, as they sat down with their backs to the dinghy and the remains of the "grub" between them, laughing gulls, passing like ghosts in the twilight, hailed them, while the stars broke out to look above the darkness and the tepid wind.

There is nothing like eating to keep up the spirits. Jude got less doleful. In the stir of mind caused by the new circumstances she had clean forgotten the "hants," nor did she remember them for a moment now, as she

chatted away in an uplift of spirits caused by the food and the recognition that to be downcast was futile.

"I sure am a mutt!" said Jude. "Reckon I was born on a Friday—they say mugs are all born on a Friday. We should a been off two hours before sundown, and there I was talking and listening to your yarns, and here we are on the beach—oh, mommer!" Then after a long pause:

"What's them stars, do you reckon?"

"Suns."

"Gar'n!"

"It's so."

"Say!"

"Yes."

"Did you notice anything looking north before sundown, or were you asleep sitting on that spar?"

"I did see something over there; looked like the ghost of a cloud."

"That was Rum Cay, and a sure sign the weather's going to hold. It lifts itself into the sky like that, evening times; you can see it from Lone Reef too."

"I wish I had known that and I should have looked at it more particularly. I was thinking."

"What was you thinking about?"

He laughed. "My people."

"Which people?"

"My relations."

"What made you think of them for?"

"You."

"Me?"

"Yes, I was wondering what you'd think of them if you saw them, especially my aunts."

"Well, you take the bun," said Jude, "you sitting there thinking of your aunts and me running with them eggs!" She stopped of a sudden; her memory had suddenly conjured up the "wuzzard."

"That cuss!" said Jude.

"Which?"

"The one I saw." She wriggled close to him till their sides touched. "S'posin'?"

"Yes?"

"S'posin' he was to take it into his head to do a walk along here?"

"Don't you bother about him," said Ratcliffe. "I'd kick him into the sea—besides, he was only an optical illusion. It was my stupid talk did it."

"I'm not bothering," said Jude, "only it's a durned long time till morning. N'matter," she rested her hand on his shoulder in all the familiarity of companionship; then she shifted her hand from his left to his right shoulder so that her arm was across his back, and then she fell silent and he felt something poking into his left shoulder—it was her nose! She had evidently under his protection forgotten "hants" and "wuzzards," forgotten him, even, for she was humming a sort of tune under her breath.

He knew exactly her mental condition,—mind wandering,—and it was a strange feeling to be cuddled like that by a person who had half-forgotten his existence, except as a protection against fears, especially when he

remembered her recent antagonism that had developed so mysteriously and as mysteriously vanished. He slipped his left arm round her to make her more comfortable. Then her nose gave place to her cheek against his shoulder and she yawned. He could feel her ribs under her guernsey and the beat of her heart just beneath the gentle swell of her breast. He remembered her coat, which was in the dinghy. She had thrown it in as an afterthought in case of a change of weather, but had never worn it.

"Hada't you better put on your coat?" asked he.

"Lord! I don't want no coat."

"But the night air."

"Nothing wrong with it. It's a Gulf wind an' as hot as a blanket—ain't you warm enough?"

"Lots."

"Ever slept out before?"

"Only in a tent—have you?"

"Which?"

"Slept out before?"

"Heaps o' times. But I wouldn't sleep out in a full moon."

"Why?"

"'Cause I don't want to wake up with my face twisted to one side like a flat fish—mean to say you don't know?—either that or a chap goes loony. But there's no fear tonight; it's only a half-moon. The only thing I'm frightened of is crabs. We've gotta keep our eyes skinned for crabs. This mayn't be a crab spit; then again, there's no knowing but it may."

"What on earth is a crab spit?"

Jude raised her face from his shoulder and sat up a bit straighter as though the question had roused her.

"Place where crabs come, hun'erds of millions of them, same as Crab Cay. There's crabs everywhere of course, but not in shiploads same as Crab Cay. Three men were drifted ashore there once, and after sundown up came the crabs and fought them all night, and there was nothing but their skeletons left in the morning. We'd better take it turn about to keep watch."

She released herself from his arm and scrambling about in the starlight on her hands and knees began to make a sand pillow.

"There you are!" said she. "Stick your head on it; I'll take first watch. You be port watch, and I'll be sta'board."

"No, you won't! I will. I'm not a bit sleepy."

"Neither'm I. Stick your head on it. You've gotta turn in or you'll be no use tomorrow."

He did as he was bid, and Jude took her place sitting on the sand close to him.

"Give us a call if anything happens," said he.

"You bet!" replied Jude.

Then he closed his eyes. A moment before and he had been leagues away from sleep, but with the compulsory closing of his eyes a drowsiness began to steal on him. The wind had died to nothing and in the dead silence of the night the sound of the waves on the mile and a half of spit came loud and low, rhythmical, mes-

meric. It was as though the tide of sleep were rising to drift him off.

Now, suddenly, he was walking in the blazing sunlight on the spit, and toward him was walking the "wuz-zard,"—a little old man in a cocked hat with a spyglass under his arm, who vanished, giving place to Jude, carrying a hatful of gulls' eggs.

Then Skelton landed from somewhere, and Jude, turning, was calling him a "pesky brute."

The words broke the dream, and he opened his eyes. The moon had just risen, touching the spit, and in her light, seated on the sand propped up on its stilts, a spirit crab, white as snow with ruby eyes, was staring at Jude.

Drugged with weariness and ozone, he closed his eyes for one moment, determined to rise up and drive the thing away in one moment. When he opened his eyes again the sun was rising.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE RETURN

THE gulls were mewling and calling and flying above him in the blue. He was lying on his back, his left arm out, and Jude's head on his shoulder.

She had snuggled up beside him for company, and then, regardless of spirit crabs, "hants," and the possibility of crustaceans landing in shiploads to devour them, had fallen asleep. Her arm was flung over his chest. It was the embrace of a tired child, delightful to wake up to as the freshness of the air and the new life of the world and the innocence of the flower-blue sky, delightful as her breath, sweet and warm against his cheek. As he moved she stirred, grumbled something under her breath, shifted her head so that his arm was released, and turned on her other side, with her right arm flung out on the sand.

He stood up. The tide was in and the dinghy only waiting to be launched. Not a sail or speck upon the sea.

Rum Cay had prophesied right,—the fine weather held,—but the water was nearly gone, and the "grub" was finished. There was no breakfast till they boarded the *Sarah* again.

He turned to where the starboard watch was lying, clinging still to Morpheus, and stirred it gently with his foot. Jude moved, turned, grumbled to herself, and then, as if electrified, sat up digging her fists into her eyes and yawning. Then she sat gazing at the sea as if stunned.

"Come on," said Ratcliffe, "we've got to be starting. All the grub's gone and nearly all the water. How did you sleep?"

"Oh, Lord!" said Jude. "I've been chasin' round the hull night with a hatful of eggs. I'm near dead beat. Which way's the wind? Sou'east. Must a changed in the night. It'll take us back in two ticks."

She collapsed again comfortably.

"Remember," said he, "the current is against us."

"Oh, it ain't no distance," said Jude, "and a few minutes more or less don't count. Wonder what Satan's doing?"

Knowing that it was hopeless to bother till the spirit moved her, he sat down on the sand beside her and began picking up little shells and casting them into the sea.

"Goodness knows!" said he. "I'm wondering what he'll say when we get back."

"He'll start jawing," said Jude dreamily and fatefully and with her eyes closed. "I can hear him as if I was listening. He'll say, 'What you mean leaving the ship, and where's your eggs?' No use telling him they're broke. Lord! I'm sick of it all! I'm just going to lay here and die."

He began to drop shells on her chest.

"Quit foolin'."

"Then get up and come on. Let's get it over. It's like having a tooth pulled,—the sooner over the better."

"Did y'ever have a tooth pulled?"

"Yes."

"What's it like?"

"Beastly for a moment, but it's soon over."

"Did y'spit blood?"

"Rather! Come on."

"I'm coming in a minute."

Then suddenly she sat up, put on her hat, scrambled to her feet, took a glance round the sea, and made for the dinghy.

"Shove in the water jar," said Jude. He put the jar in, seized the opposite gunnel, and ran her down.

In a minute they were afloat, the sail spread to the wind, Jude steering and holding the sheet. Gulls chased them out, and the beam wind meeting tide and current sent boosts of spray on board. It was a rougher passage coming than going, and a more silent one. Ratcliffe, squatting in the bottom of the boat, had little else to do than smoke and watch Jude. Jude, engaged with her own thoughts, and with her eyes keened for the indications of Lone Reef, seemed absolutely to have forgotten him.

There was no indication of the companion who had slept with her arm round him, who had sat almost lovingly, half-forgetfully, with her arm across his shoulder and his arm round her waist.

It came to him suddenly and with a curious pang that Jude would never be more than that,—a warm companion if cast alone together, just as she might be with Satan, or any stranger her fancy approved of.

Instinctively he felt that there was a barrier,—a curious barrier, he seemed to have broken through that night he took her part, and when, for the first time in her life, she had confessed herself at fault; a barrier, that had, however, mended itself. It was as though he had injured her independence. Yet Satan was injuring her independence all day long with his orders and what not. Ay, but Satan was her brother, almost part of herself. She would not have banged Satan on the head for kissing her.

He gave up thinking, watching her and how well she handled the boat. The crying of the gulls round the spit had died down; nothing remained but the voice of the sea, silent as dumb death from the blue horizon to the planking of the dinghy when it spoke.

"That's her!" suddenly said Jude.

"What?"

"Lone—I kin see the spars of the *Juan* an' the *Sarah*. Rubber and you'll see them too."

He turned with his elbow resting on the thwart and picked out the spars on the sea-line.

"And the *Natchez*," said Jude. "Look, close up to the *Juan*. Cleary's put in and we not there! I'd forgot Cleary; didn't believe he'd pick up the place so soon. There he is. Oh, hell!"

"No matter," said Ratcliffe; "it can't be helped."

"Cuss them gulls! If they'd stuck to their laying places, we'd have got the eggs soon's we'd landed and been back last night. Wonder what's been going on?"

"Well," said he, "Satan's all right. Cleary has no grudge against him. If there has been any bother, it has been between Cleary and Sellers."

"Maybe," said Jude.

An hour later they were so close up that they could see the reef-line and the line of the wreck with fellows working on it. Whatever had happened, business was going on as usual.

The three vessels, anchored and swinging to the tide, looked peaceful enough, and as they drew up to the *Sarah*, Satan, who had just appeared on deck, came and stood by the starboard rail watching them.

They fastened up, preparing for an explosion. None came.

"Couldn't get back last night," said Jude as they came on board. "Left it till sundown, and then I was afeard of the current."

"Afeard of the dark," said Satan. "I reckoned that'd be so—whar's your eggs?"

"Gone phut. Smashed the lot. Wasn't more than a hatful. Them rotten gulls had given up nesting, all but at the ends—and say, Satan, I saw a wuzzard! I was carrying the eggs when I saw him, and then I ran and smashed the lot."

"A which?"

"A hant—little old chap walking on the sands. D'you remember the figurehead on that old bark they broke

up last year at Havana,—man with a glass under his arm and the other arm wavin' his hat? That was him plain as my eye. He up with his glass and I let one yelp. Rat'll tell you: he saw me running."

"Oh, git along—git along, you and your hants! I'd been countin' on them eggs, and here you come back like a one-eyed skite with your yarns about hants. Why, you ought a had a boatful! Didn't you see no turkles' eggs?"

"Nope."

"Well, come along down if you want some grub. I sighted you more'n an hour ago, and there's coffee waitin'. D'ye see that?" He pointed to a new-washed jumper drying in the blazing sun on the rail.

"Well, I was het up," said Jude, "or I'd have la'ndered it before I started."

"Come along down," said Satan.

It came to Ratcliffe that the quietude of Satan over the business came less from natural good temper than some other reason. The desertion of the *Sarah* was mutiny and a rank crime. Satan had been left with his food to cook and his jumper to wash, his sister had been off with an almost stranger for a whole night—yet he was not displeased.

If Jude had done the business alone, she most surely would have been carpeted. It was evidently his—Ratcliffe's—participation in it that fended off trouble and turned wrath into complacency. Why?

Was it because he was a guest? Not a bit! Satan, had he been angry, would not have bothered about that.

He followed down below, and there, over the breakfast table, the Cleary business was cleared up.

"He dropped in last night," said Satan, "an hour before sundown, and the anchor hadn't more than clawed the mud before he was aboard the *Juan*. I expected the shootin' to begin; but there weren't no fireworks, and after dark I lit out for the *Juan* in the c'lapsible and tied up and boarded her. All the men were in the foc'sle, eating onions and playin' tunes on guitars,—no anchor watch,—and the Cleary crowd down in the saloon as friendly as pie, Cark ladling the liquor and Cleary suckin' it down, cigars as big as your leg in their faces, and Cleary with his thumbs in the armhulls of his vest leanin' back laughin'. That's how I found them."

"I told you," said Jude to Ratcliffe, "they'd be kissing each other and—"

"Suppose you shet your head!" said Satan. "I'm tellin' you—there they were sittin' all colludin' together thick as thick, and I sat for an hour with them and then lit out. Sweet as sugar they were; but I tell you this, I'm as frightened as hell."

"How's thet?"

"Cleary. Y'see Cark and Sellers aren't much by themselves, but Cleary is the snake's tooth an' poison bug of that combination, now that he's joined in with Cark again. Cleary's Irish gone bad on the father's side and drunk Welsh on the mother's: I had his pedigree from Pap. Pap said he was a sure-enough thoroughbred of a hellhound, and he reckoned the roof of his mouth was black right down to the heart of him. Well, I've had

forty dollars from Cleary for them rotten pearls and one thousand dollars from Cark on account of takin's. Now you see how I am, supposin' the wreck turns out a dud. D'you mean to say they won't go for me to get their money back? Supposin' the gold is there. D'you mean to say they won't chouse me out of my share?"

"What are you going to do?"

"I worked the hull thing out last night before I boarded them. Seeing there was no fighting, I concluded they'd joined up an' become friends; then I made my plans, I didn't put out no anchor light.

"Sellers, when I was leaving the *Juan*, said, 'Whar's your light?'

"'Run short of oil,' says I. 'Kin you let me have some?' He thought I was tryin' to wangle oil out of him, and he closed; said he was run short himself."

"What was your meaning in not putting out a light?" asked Jude.

"Maybe you'll find out," said Satan, "if you keep your eyes skinned and stop askin' questions. Well, that's where we are. They'll have the barrel of gunpowder fixed by tomorrow to blow the deck off her, and as soon as they put a light to it we'll know. It's blastin' powder and ought to split the deck to finders if they fix it proper. I don't b'lieve it's coral coverin' that deck, I b'lieve it's old petrifacted guano, if you ask me; anyhow, it's hard enough."

"By Jove!" said Ratcliffe. "If that's so, it bears out my theory. I came to the conclusion that the old hooker had never been under water according to that yarn Lopez

slung; yet I couldn't account for the coral deposits. I believe you're right. I believe the real wreck is lying at that place you said that's given in the latitude and longitude. Well, see here, why not get the anchor up and light out right now for the other place. They wouldn't follow."

"Wouldn't they?" said Satan. "The *Natches* would be after us like a cat pouncin'. No, I'd rather stick, if it's all the same to you, and see the fireworks. After that leave 'em to me. There aren't many's got the better of me when my dander's up. Now then, Jude, if you've done stuffin' yourself, maybe you'll lend a hand on deck. There's swabbin' to be done."

CHAPTER XXIV

A BOTTLE OF RUM

RATCLIFFE helped in the swabbing and polishing. No housekeeper ever exercised more meticulous care in this respect than Satan. He was a fanatic where cleanliness was concerned, and polish,—witness the brasswork of the wheel, the binnacle and skylight,—even paint and varnish were minor gods compared with Brasso!

Meanwhile, as the Sarahites worked, the *Natches* and *Juan*, lying in cynical and sinister neglect and dirt, showed little signs of life. The working party on the reef seemed busy enough; but the ships, save for a few hands lounging at the rails or squatting about the foc'sle head, might have been deserted.

About ten o'clock a boat put off from the *Natches*. Cleary was in the sternsheets, and as she came alongside he hailed the *Sarah*.

Satan came to the rail.

"Sellers's going to bust her open today," said Cleary. "Just had word from him."

"I thought he wouldn't be ready till tomorrow," said Satan.

"Just had word the hole's near deep enough and the star cuttin's from it. He's got the powder off and reckons to fire it at noon. Wants you to come an' help."

"Oh, does he?"

"He's a bit bothered about the fuse, not havin' done much of that sort of work, and he reckons you're an ingenious cuss an'll be able to put him wise."

"Oh, does he? Well, I'll be there."

Cleary came over the rail.

"No spittin'!" cried Satan.

Cleary, averting his head in time to send the squirt of tobacco juice overside instead of on the deck, looked around.

He nodded at Ratcliffe, disregarded Jude, and fixed his eye on the blazing binnacle and the glittering rods of the skylight.

"Dandy ship," said he. "Whaar you goin' to take the prize?"

"Where your old tub'd be skeered to show her nose. How's the potato crop gettin' along?"

Cleary turned his quid over and allowed his eyes to travel about the deck.

"Waal," said he, speaking with point and consideration, "some likes one thing and some likes another, but I never did see that fandanglin' with frills an' brasswork an' sich lends anythin' to the *sailin'* qualities of a ship."

Jude, raising herself up from flemish coiling a rope, blazed out:

"Maybe it don't to an old cod boat blowin' along with her own smell," began Jude.

"Shet up!" said Satan. Then to Cleary, "Have a drink?"

"I'm willin'," said Cleary, "but thought you was a dry ship."

Satan winked, slipped below, and returned with a bottle of rum, a glass, and a water jar. There were three or four bottles of rum on board. Satan said he kept the stuff for "rubbing his corns"; he never drank it. There were also a revolver and a rifle on board. He never fired them: lethal weapons have their time and place.

Satan, having placed the bottle and jar on the deck, produced another glass from his pocket, filled out a four-finger peg for Cleary and another for himself.

"Here's luck," said Cleary.

"Here's luck—no *spittin'!*"

They drained glasses.

"Holy Mike!" cried Cleary, his eyes bulging and his face injected. "What sorter bug-water's this?"

"British Navy; thirty over proof."

Cleary, with one eye shut, seemed turning over in his mind the activities going on in his stomach and on the whole approving.

"Well," said he, "I've drunk wasp brandy and one or two nigger dopes—they don't get near it, not in knots. A man'd want to be a centipede to carry a bottle of that stuff, I reckon. N'more, thanky. Well, I'm off, and I'll fly a flag when Cark gives the signal he's got the stuff ready for the fuse."

Off he went.

"For the land's sake, Satan! what made you swallow that stuff for?" said Jude.

Satan took his seat on the skylight edge, then he gulped, then he hiccupped.

"Get your hind legs under you and cart the bottle and the glasses down below," said Satan. "Strewth!—gimme the water jar till I flood my hold."

He drank till Ratcliffe thought he would never stop, then he went to the port rail and canceled matters.

"It's Demerara Black John," said he apologetically to Ratcliffe as he turned, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. "Some likes it, but I've no holdin' with drink."

Ratcliffe was about to ask why he had swallowed it, but he checked himself. Jude, who had just appeared again, put the question.

"What in the nation made you drink that snake-juice?" asked Jude.

Satan took a glance at the sun, at the reef, and at the *Juan*.

"Now then," said he, "finish up clarin' away that raffle and get the dinner ready; I've no time to be talkin'."

He set to sand and canvassing the rail he had been working on when Cleary appeared, Jude and Ratcliffe took up their jobs, and the ordinary life of the *Sarah* resumed as though the rum incident had never been.

All the same, work could not prevent Ratcliffe from pondering the dark problem of Satan and his doings.

Why had he not put out an anchor light last night? Why had he pretended to Sellers that he was short of

A BOTTLE OF RUM 219

oil? Why had he swallowed a glass of rum only to unswallow it again?

Then in the monotony of work his mind passed from these considerations to a state of pleasant expectancy. What would they find in the wreck, and the explosion of the barrel of powder, how would it come off?

He felt as pleased as a boy about to fire a brass cannon and not sure whether it will burst or not.

CHAPTER XXV.

THEY FIRE THE FUSE

SATAN used a modification of the deck bear for cleaning his decks; that is to say, a box filled with stones having a rough mat nailed under it. The deck having been sprinkled with sand, the bear had to be pulled backward and forward after the fashion of a carpet sweeper. This was Ratcliffe's job, and he was not sorry when it was over.

Dinner was served at eight bells, and getting along toward one o'clock the *Natches* and *Juan* were flying all sorts of flags on the tepid breeze as a signal, evidently, that it was time to get to business.

Ratcliffe made out the red and white flag indicating H, the triangular blue with the white ball, the red cross on a white ground, and the white with the blue square,—H. D. V. S.

"What are they trying to say?" he asked.

"Oh, them flags," replied Satan. "*They're* not tryin' to say anythin', only flyin' to show time's up. Cark hasn't got a full set of the c'mercial code; wouldn't know how to use them, neither. Now if you're ready we'll put off. Jude will stick here to keep ship."

Jude protested.

THEY FIRE THE FUSE 221

"Why, you'll see the blow-up from here a durned sight better than from the boat," said Satan.

"I want to see her innards when the deck's off," said Jude.

"Why, Lord bless me! you'll have days to see them in," said Satan, "and there's no knowin' what may happen when the blow-up comes, what with flyin' timbers and muck. I'll come back and bring you off when the powder's fired. I can't say fairer than that."

They got into the dinghy and shoved off, Jude watching them.

Sellers was waiting for them on the reef, and Cleary. Their boats were on the strip of beach surrounded by the crews, and a couple of fellows on the wreck were putting the last touches to the preparation of the charge. Sellers was holding what seemed a length of thick white cord in his hand.

"Here's the fuse," said he. "I had it left over with the barrel from that last wrecking business we did in the fall. It's a five-minutes' fuse."

"Oh, is it?" said Satan, handling the thing. "And where's your guarantee? S'posin' it only takes a minute? And five minutes is none too much for the man that fires it to get clear of the reef and put out."

"That's true," said Sellers, "and one of you will have to do the firin' business, seein' I'm lame."

"What's lamed you?"

"Fell on the deck this mornin' over a slush tub one of them damn dagoes left lyin' in the dark. Near put my knee out."

"Then Cleary will do the trick," said Satan.

Cleary laughed. "Not me! I'm not lame, but it ain't my job. Runnin' over rocks don't suit me, and I reckon the man that lays a light to that thing will want to be a boundin' kangaroo."

"Instead of a damned ass like y'self," said Satan. "Come on, I'll light it, I'm not afeard."

They clambered over the rocks, crossed the rock bridge, and gained the wreck.

The little barrel had been well and truly laid, the top almost flush with the level of the stuff covering the deck.

"We got right through the deck plankin'," said Sellers, "or to a crossbeam. Wood's most dry-rotted, and it'll be a nacheral mercy if the powder don't blow the whole coffee shop to blazes right down to the reef. Here's the hole for the fuse."

While they were examining the fuse-hole, Ratcliffe took notice of the cuts radiating starlike from the charge-hole that had been made in the deck-casing. When he turned again, Satan, with the aid of Sellers, had fixed the fuse. The Spanish sailors who had been at work had taken their departure and were already down by the boats, leaving only four men on the wreck,—Satan, Sellers, Cleary and himself.

Satan rose up, clapped the knees of his trousers as if to knock dust off them, and produced a yellow box of Swedish matches from his pocket.

"Look here!" said Ratcliffe. "It's not fair. Let's draw lots who'll fire the thing."

"Not me," said Satan. "I wouldn't trust one of them

two with a box of matches, let alone a dollar. Now then, scatter for the boats!"

Then to Ratcliffe, as Sellers and Cleary made off, "Stand by ready to shove the dinghy off when you see me coming."

"All right," said the other; "but I'll stick by you if you like."

"I reckon two don't run quicker than one," said Satan. "Off with you, and, if I'm blown to blazes, look after the kid."

When Ratcliffe reached the strip of beach the boats of the *Juan* and *Natchez* had shoved off. He could see the figure of Carquinez at the after-rail of the *Juan* and Jude watching from the *Sarah*. He pulled the dinghy down a bit more to the water and then, turning, looked at the wreck.

Satan was standing against the skyline, now he was down on his knees, and now he was up again. The fuse had evidently been fired, but he did not move; stood evidently looking to see that it was burning properly, and then moved off, walking, not running, and not even hurrying himself.

Then he came clambering over the rocks, reached the dinghy, and they pushed off.

"Well, you are a cool chap," said Ratcliffe. "I'd have run."

"And broke your leg, maybe. There's no danger unless a spark got at the powder. The durned thing was sparkin' and spittin' like all possessed when I left it. I reckon that's why Sellers got cold feet. We're out far

enough now." He ceased rowing, and they hung drifting.

Ratcliffe looked round. The other boats were much farther out. The tepid wind had almost died off, so that the flags on the *Juan* and *Natches* hung in wisps. They could hear the wash of the water on the reef and the occasional lamentation of a gull. No other sound broke the silence of the blue and gorgeous afternoon.

"Seems like as if everything was listenin', don't it?" said Satan, wiping his forehead. "The bust ought to have come by this. Wonder if the durned thing has fizzled out?"

A gull made derisive answer and across the satin smooth swell a hail came from the *Juan*.

"That's Cark," said Satan, "makin' kind inquiries, blister him!"

"There she goes!" cried Ratcliffe.

A jet of flame and a column of smoke sprang from the reef, followed by a clap of thunder that could have been heard at Rum Cay.

Flying filth and deck planking filled the air, and on top of all came the yelling of a thousand gulls.

The dinghy jumped as though from the blow of a great fist—then silence, and over the reef a filthy dun-colored cloud of smoke curling upward like a djin.

Satan seized the sculls and headed for the beach. The boats of the *Juan* and *Natches*, already under way, were rowing as if for a wager, but the dinghy had the lead. They beached her, hauled her up a foot, and started over the rocks, running this time, heedless of broken limbs,

THEY FIRE THE FUSE 225

Satan leading like the bounding kangaroo of Cleary's and whooping as he went.

The rock bridge was still intact, but nearly the whole of the after part of the deck was gone.

"Go careful!" cried Satan. He got down on hands and knees and, crawling, followed by Ratcliffe, leaned over the break and looked.

Ratcliffe cried out in horror.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE CARGO

IN that vast and gloomy interior the great beams showed like the ribs of some eviscerated monster and the honest light of day fell sick upon the cargo,—a cargo of skulls, ribs, vertebræ, and entire skeletons, piled high, as though five hundred men had struggled aft for exit in one mad rush and died heaped one upon the other like refuse. A charnel, limy smell rose, poisoning the air.

“Good God!” said Ratcliffe.

“Slaver,” said Satan. “What did I tell you? *Nombre de Dios* be sugared! She’s an old slaver, wrecked with the men under hatches. Here’s Sellers!”

Sellers, panting, his face all mottled, and followed by Cleary, had gained the deck.

“Boys, what is it?” cried Sellers.

“Gold!” cried Satan. “Go careful, for the hull deck’s sprung. Get on your hands and knees. Gold bars an’ di’monds—we’re all rich men!”

The pair of scoundrels, crawling like crabs, stuck their heads over the break.

“Oh, hell!” said Sellers.

“Slaver,” said Satan.

Cleary spat. He was the first to laugh.

"This is putting it over on Cark, ain't it?" said Cleary. "How many dollars d'you think it's cost our firm to blow the lid off this damned scrofagus, to say nothin' of the time? And he packed me off to Pensacola to get me out of the way! Oh, send for him to have a look!"

"No use sendin', he's comin'," said Satan, pointing to where the gig of the *Juan* was approaching the beach.

Carquinez crossed the rock-bridge and advanced along the deck, clutching his old coat together and making bird-like noises. When he reached the break, crouching like the others, he looked over.

The sight below did not seem to horrify him.

"Slaver," said Satan for the third time, turning his head for a moment from the objects that seemed to fascinate him.

"Pst, pst, pst!" said Carquinez. "Vel, I reckon dat is so."

"No gold ship," said Sellers.

"Maybe there was gold in the after-cabin," suddenly broke in Cleary, "and the niggers broke through the bulk-head and are on top of it."

"Where's your bulkheads?" asked Sellers. "There was no after-cabin to the hooker. It was all one cattle boat below, with niggers for cattle."

"That is so," said Carquinez.

The old gentleman seemed taking his setback extraordinarily well; so, too, seemed Sellers and Cleary. They were evidently used to reverses in business, and treasure hunting was wildcat anyway, a thousand to one against the chance of a colossal fortune.

"That is so," said Carquinez. Then he proceeded to demonstrate what the hold of a slaver was like,—men lying side by side and sometimes on top of one another. There was no after-cabin, indeed nothing, no latrines, no means of washing, nothing: just one vast sty without straw even for the human beasts to lie on.

The officers and crew slept in deckhouses; sometimes the crew had nothing to shelter them, sleeping on the bare decks.

Carquinez knew it all. His grandfather had been in the business, and he mentioned the fact with a sort of pride.

Then he drew back from the break like a reptile balked and retreating, rose to his feet, and stood contemplating the sea.

Satan rose also, as did Ratcliffe.

"I'm off," said Satan. "This boneyard don't please me any. Say, what you goin' to do?"

"Von moment," said Cark.

"Which?" asked Satan.

"Cark means how about the contrac'?" said Sellers.

"Which way?"

"Lord! Why, we're left, left with a cargo of skeletons, and you—why, you've got a thousand dollars in your pocket."

"There was nothin' in the contrac' about handin' them back," said Satan; "b'sides the contrac's bust. That thousand dollars was on account of findin's. Is it my fault the findin's is skelentons? But, see here, you give's

a few hours to turn the thing over, and come aboard the *Sarah* gettin' along sundown, and we'll have a clack. We're all in the soup, seems to me, and I'm not wishin' to be hard on you."

"We'll drop aboard," said Sellers.

Cleary said nothing.

After his outburst of laughter he had remained dumb.

"Well, I'm off," said Satan. "I want a drink and that's the truth. The smell of them skelentons's enough to start a Baptist's minister on the booze." Then he turned to Carquinez. "What did I tell you, sittin' in your cabin? Told you I didn't bank on this business, maybe you'll remember that. Blast treasure liftin'! Leavin' salvage aside, have you ever seen an ounce of gold raised in all these years? There was a hundred million lyin' off Dry Tortugas—did they ever get it? How many ships has been down to Trinidad huntin' for the pirates' gold? Knight was the last man there—a lot he made of it! It's only the chaps that sell locations to mugs that make money over this business, it's my b'lief. Well, see you aboard later on."

Off he went, Ratcliffe following.

As they came alongside the *Sarah*, Jude was hanging over the rail.

"What's the luck?" cried Jude as they came aboard.

"Skelentons," said Satan, "shipload of skulls an' cross-bones. Slaver, that's what she was; dead men's bones, that's your treasure."

"Lord! And I've never seen them!"

"Well, there's nothin' much to see," said Satan, with the irritating nonchalance of the one who has seen the show; "ain't worth the trouble of lookin'."

"I want to see them skelentons," said Jude.

"Tell you they ain't wuth lookin' at!"

"I want to see them—"

"Oh, well then, tumble into the boat, tumble into the boat, and I'll row you over."

Ratcliffe watched while the dinghy passed over to the reef. He saw Jude on the wreck, kneeling and poring over the cargo, held, evidently, by the fascination that lies for youth in the horrible.

Then they returned, and Satan ordered the dinghy to be taken on board.

"Are you going to put out now?" asked Ratcliffe.

"Put out!" said Satan, with a grin. "Why, I've asked those fellers to come aboard gettin' on for sundown, and whether or no if I raised a foot of chain they'd be on me with the first click of the windlass. I tell you we're in a tight place! Cleary said nothin', you noticed that, but he's goin' to have his forty dollars back if he knows how, and Sellers is the samê,—he wants his thousand. We're held for one thousand and forty dollars, and we're not strong enough to fight them."

"Well, see here," said the peacemaker. "Pay them. I'll stand the racket. It's only a little over two hundred pounds, and I'll give you a check."

"You don't get me," said Satan. "It's not the dollars I'm thinkin' of so much as the game. Cark played me a low-down trick lightin' out for here to scoop the boodle,

and Cleary laughed at me with his old cod boat outsailin' us. They've got to pay. B'sides, if I was to hand over that money, I'd never be able to show my nose again in Havana."

"How so?"

"Why, them two would put the laugh on me, and it'd be 'what price skelentons' wherever I went, see? I'd be the mug then. They're the mugs now, seein' they've paid a thousand and forty for what they've got."

"I see. But considering that they'll be after you if you move, and that we're not strong enough to fight them, what's to be done?"

"Well," said Satan, "when they come aboard it'll be either to get the dollars back or fight. You've noticed I asked them to come, seein' they'd have come whether I asked them or not. Well, if I can foozle them into hanging on for their answer till tomorrow, I'll give them the slip tonight. Moon's not up till late."

"But they'll hear you getting the anchor up and handling the sails."

"Not with an ear trumpet," said Satan, "if I can only foozle them into waitin' till tomorrow. Now then, Jude, lend a hand with the dinghy."

CHAPTER XXVII

CROCKERY WARE

AN hour before sunset, Jude, on the lookout, gave the alarm. "Sellers's getting ready to come off," she cried.

Satan's head appeared at the cabin hatch.

"Sure?"

"The boat's alongside the *Juan* full of dagoes, and Sellers and Cleary's gettin' in."

"Where did you stick that bottle of nose-paint?"

"Starboard forward locker."

"One minute."

In a minute the head reappeared and an arm holding the rum bottle.

"Now, mind you, I'm drunk," said Satan, "fightin' drunk, not to be disturbed on no account. They can call again tomorrow morning."

He smashed the rum bottle on the deck.

"Leave the pieces lyin'." He vanished.

Jude looked at Ratchiffe and grinned.

"Rub your nose and pretend to be cryin'," came a voice from below.

"What for should I be cryin'?" answered Jude.

"God A'mighty! I'll show you if I get on deck!

Ain't I drunk and cuttin' up? What else would you be doin'? I'll larn you!"

A smash of crockery came from below that made the housekeeper spring to the cabin skylight.

"Quit foolin'," cried she. "I'm willin' to rub the damn nose off my head, but stop smashin' the plates—what have you broke?"

Another plate went.

"I'm rubbin'."

"Here they are!" cried Ratcliffe.

Jude's nose did not seem to want any rubbing, nor her face. Descended from generations of crockery worshippers and careful housewives, instinctively hating Cleary, Sellers, Cark, and all their belongings, feeling with perfect illogic that they had been done out of the treasure by the "skelentons" somehow through Cark, she was convincing. Satan with rare art had worked her up to the part. She was not crying: her mind was raging above tears.

"Hullo, Kid!" cried Sellers, as the boat ground alongside and a filthy ruffian with a handkerchief twisted round his head clawed on with a boathook. "What's the matter, Kid? What's up with you? Where's Satan?"

"Who're you kiddin'?" cried Jude, as Sellers came aboard, followed by Cleary. "Where the hull are your fenders? Comin' cuttin' the paint off, you and your skullintons! Where's Satan? He's down below drunk as Billy be damn and cuttin' the lights out of the ship."

"He's been at the eyewash I was tellin' you of," said

Cleary. "Look, he's broke a bottle of it. Lord! don't the place stink?"

"Well, drunk or sober, he's got to bail up," said Sellers. "It's my belief he's been spoofin' us all along."

"Spoofin' who?" cried Jude.

"Cark an' me."

"Cark an' you—that old leather face an' *you!* Satan been spoofin' you—pair of yeggmen! Satan's straight, the on'y straight man in Havana! Get off this ship! Come in the mornin' if you want to try an' rob him. Off with you now!"

"Why," cried Sellers, half-laughing, half-angry, "what's the matter with the kid? What's gingerin' you up?"

The answer came from another smashed plate below.

Jude made one spring for a deck-mop standing handy, twirled it so that the water sprayed from it in a rainbow, and brought it to the charge.

Cleary slipped over the rail.

"Off with you!" cried Jude.

"Put down that mop!" cried Sellers, now suddenly furious. "Put down that mop, you braying little bitch! Go'n get inter your petticoats! You ain't a boy! I never b'lieved it, not for the last six months, an' now I know. You've give yourself away proper. Why, look at you, as round as a tub—you're a wumman!"

Ratcliffe looked on horrified. Jude, flushed and bright-eyed, had somehow revealed her sex. In her excitement she looked for a moment almost beautiful. Her tongue had done the rest. The smashing of the plates had

brought the woman out of her as a conjurer brings a rabbit out of a hat.

"Put down that mop!"

Jude from rose color had turned awfully white; then with the élan and dash of a gamecock she charged. The wet swab hit the ruffian full in his flat face, and he fell on the deck with a bang.

In a second he was up and scrambling over the rail. Again she charged, the swab meeting him this time full on his stern and sending him over into the boat like a bag of oats.

A slush tub, fortunately half-full, and marked by her prescient mind, was her next weapon. The contents caught Cleary full in the face, and as the boat made off, the oars, all at sixes and sevens, wildly rowing, she pursued it with the battery of her tongue till it was out of range. Then she broke down and cried, sniffed, with her arm hiding her face, and then flushed, like a thing of shame dived below.

Ratcliffe knew.

Her sex proclaimed aloud by the shameless Sellers was as a garment stripped off her publicly. On the very first day Satan had stated her case and she didn't mind, though he, Ratcliffe, had been a stranger; but it was different now, somehow. It was as if the end of her boyhood had come. Sellers would no doubt proclaim the fact in Havana.

He heard voices from below.

"I don't care if I'd killed him! Wish't I had! Lea' me alone—for two cents I'd go drown myself! Look at

them plates! You've broke the two blue pattern ones an' the chaney one with the bird on it, the best we had, an' not a cracked one touched! Hain't you no sense?"

"Never you mind; I'll get you some more."

"I'm not wanting more. Them plates were mother's—much you care! I've gone as careful as walking on eggs with them, and now they're broke an' the old Delf' ones left. If you must be breaking and cutting up, couldn't you a broke the cracked ones? An' where's the sense in breaking them anyhow?"

"Waal, I reckoned it'd liven you up hearin' the crockery goin'."

"Liven me up! Makes me believe you *have* been getting at the rum to hear you talk. Where's the sense in all your doings,—ship stinking of driak and all the crockery broke, and what's the use?"

"I'll show you after dark. I tell you I want to get away from those thugs, and if I hadn't headed them off pretendin' to be drunk they'd have gone through me."

"Well, they'll go through you right enough tomorrow morning."

"No, they won't."

"Which way?"

"I'll be gone."

"Gone! Why, first click of the windlass and they'll be aboard us."

"You leave it to me."

"Well, I wish we'd have went before you broke them plates."

"Oh, cuss the plates!"

"Easy to say that. It makes me just nacheral wild to see that old Delf' plate starin' me in the face, round and sound, and the blue pattern ones gone."

Silence for a moment, at the end of which Satan's head and bust appeared at the cabin hatch.

He winked at Ratcliffe, and pointed backward with his thumb and down below, as if indicating the domestic trouble.

"There's no sign of them swabs comin' off again?" asked he.

"No," said Ratcliffe. "They seem to have had enough of it."

The rum bottle had broken fairly in two without splinters.

"You might heave the bottle over, like a good one," said Satan. "I can't show on deck for fear of those shrimps seein' me. It'll be dark in an hour, and then I'll be up. You can wait for your supper till we get away?"

"Oh, yes," said Ratcliffe; "I'm in no hurry."

CHAPTER XXVIII

TIDE AND CURRENT

HE lit a pipe. Having disposed of the fragments of the bottle, he got the mop and a bucket of water and swabbed the rum-stained deck. Then he took his seat forward and watched the sunset.

The great sun, half-shorn of his beams and bulging broad as Jupiter, lolled above the reef in a sky of laburnum gold fading to aquamarine. Gulls, dark as withered leaves, blew about him, and shifting here and there to north and south became gulls of gold, while the wind blowing up from the gulf and the westward running current, meeting the last of the flood, broke the sea surface into a million tiny dancing waves, momentary mirrors dazzling the eye with shattered light.

Lone Reef seemed well named. Dawn or sunset or the blaze of full day could not take from its desolation, and this evening the sinister line of the wreck dominated everything, turning the blaze of sunset to the light of a funeral pyre.

The *Sarah*, moving to the swell, creaked and whimpered, and now and then from below he could hear voices, —Jude's voice and the voice of Satan. Beyond that came the murmur of the reef and the clang of the gulls,

and now and again a snatch of Spanish song from the *Juan*.

Then the sun passed below the reef, the tide began to draw out, and the *Sarah*, swinging to it, brought to his view the *Juan* and the *Natchez*, ships of dusk in a world of dusk powdered with star dust. Presently a light was run up on the *Natchez*, then the *Juan* put up her riding light, then Satan appeared, a dusky form, rising from the cabin hatch and followed by Jude.

They came forward. Jude squatted on the deck, and Satan drew close to Ratcliffe.

"Now, if them skunks had any sense in their skulls, they'd stick out a guard boat," said Satan; "but I've fair put the hood on them, I b'lieve, and they've never saw what I was after, pretendin' I had no oil for an anchor light. Why, they are only fit to be put out to nuss! Half an hour more and we'll be off."

"How are you going to do it?"

"Knock the shackle off the anchor chain an' let her drift. Tide an' current is runnin' four knots."

"But even without the anchor light they'll be able to see us by the stars."

"Lord bless you! at this distance they won't be able to see mor'n a glimpse of us. We'll go so gradual they won't notice. If they keep a lookout at all,—which they won't, ten to one,—he'll see us by believin' we're there."

"Lord! I'd love to see their faces in the morning!" murmured Jude.

"But won't they go for you when we get back to Havana?" asked Ratcliffe.

"Not they," said Satan. "They'll say nothin', seein' as how they're done and the laugh's against them. Why, Cark will respect me more for this job than if I'd run straight with him over the biggest deal. If it'd been the other way about and he'd pulled the dollars off me, I'd have been nowhere with him. Mind you out here, if I was to stick here till tomorrow, they'd be aboard and maybe manhandling us if I didn't bail up; but back in Havana the thing will be closed and the accounts wrote off."

The sound of a guitar came through the dusk, crossing the warm wind, the lazy, languorous wind of a perfect summer's night. Seville, which he had never seen, rose before Ratcliffe, firefly-haunted orange groves, lovely women all skewered together by the remembered words of a ribald song.

"When I was a student at Cadiz!"

"There goes old Catguts," said Satan. "He's the band aboard the *Juan*,—Antonio, Alonzo, Alphonso—damn his name!"

"It ain't," said Jude. "It's that old copper-patch Cleary's got with him. I've heard him in harbor. I gave him a plug of tobacco once for getting me some bait, and he showed me the thing. It's got a crack in it or suthin', and makes a noise like a skeeter in a jug,—kind a fizzin' noise between the plonks. He's got an ulster on his leg so's you can see the bone. He took off the rags an' showed me—he's a Portugee."

TIDE AND THE CURRENT 241

"Well, it's time to get busy," said Satan. "Here, h'ist yourself and lend a hand!"

Ratcliffe got more forward while they knocked the shackle off the chain. There came a splash. Then the meeting resumed.

"If they heard that splash," said Satan, "they'd put it down to a fish jumpin'. Now you watch them lights."

Ratcliffe watched the amber lights of the *Natches* and *Juan*. They did not seem to alter position in the least. In the first of the starlight and the last of the dusk the spars and hulls of the two vessels could just be made out.

Then presently he saw that the lights had drawn a bit more aft and seemed closer together. The feel of the *Sarah* was different too, she moved more freely to the swell.

The sound of the guitar seemed slightly fainter.

Now and then the beguiling sea would give the *Sarah* a little slap, no louder than the slap of a girl's hand, on the low planking as if joking with her over some secret shared in common.

Yes, the sound of the guitar was fainter, much fainter, and the spars and hulls of the vessels now invisible as though they had been dissolved in the gloom.

The anchor lights alone marked their places.

"We're all right now," said Satan; "but I'll give them another five minutes. Got the matches for the binnacle light?"

"Yes," said Jude.

Five minutes passed, then they got the canvas on her,

and Satan, at the wheel, taking his bearings from the far-off lights of the betrayed ones, turned the spokes.

“Where are you going to sail for?” asked Ratcliffe.

“Cormorant Cay,” said Satan. “I’ve a fancy to look at that place.”

CHAPTER XXIX

SATAN IN PARADISE

HE had divided Ratcliffe and Jude into watches, port and starboard.

Jude turned in first, relieving him somewhere about two in the morning. At six, when Ratcliffe turned out and came on deck, he found Satan at the wheel, relinquished by Jude, and day pursuing the *Sarah* across a wrinkled sea of tourmaline and hinted blue. Away ahead somewhere to the south lay Cormorant Cay, the true tomb, if the chart indications were correct, of the *Nombre de Dios*.

A strong sailing wind was blowing, and Satan gave their speed at seven knots. He refused to hand over the wheel.

"I've had a snooze on deck," said he, "while the kid took charge. We're nearly sixty miles south of Lone, and if this wind holds will be on to Cormorant somewhere about eight bells."

"Not a sign of those chaps," said Ratcliffe, looking back over the sea, clear of Cleary and Sellers and their dirty crowd.

"Naw; they'll be just about rousin' up now and rubbin' their eyes."

"You don't think they'll try to follow us?"

"Not likely, I don't think. They're wastin' time and money if they cruise after us. Cark's got his business in Havana to attend to, and Cleary's the same. What's gettin' me is the fac' that Sellers has spotted the kid for what she is. It'll be all over Havana, and she knows it."

"Well, it had to come out some time."

"Maybe."

"Look here, Satan!" said Ratcliffe. "I've been thinking a lot about the girl and what's to become of her. She can't go on as she is. We must fix up something."

"That's easy said."

"Well, I've grown fonder of her than any person I've ever met, that's the truth. There's no one like her; she's gold right through."

"She ain't bad."

"This sort of thing was all right when she was a child," went on Ratcliffe; "but she's growing out of that. Why, even in the little time since I've come aboard, she seems different, somehow."

"Well, if you ask me," said Satan, "you seem to have made a change in her. She's brightened up, somehow, has more sass in her. Y'see, when we were cruisin' round since Pap died, me, she, and the nigger, there wasn't much company, and she was gettin' a bit down-hearted. Then, when you came aboard, she picked up. She hadn't laughed for weeks till she saw you in that pajama rig; then she chummed onto you."

"She did."

"Liked you from the first minute she saw you. There's

no two ways about Jude,—it's either like or the other thing, right off."

"Well, I'm pretty much the same—and I don't want to lose sight of her—or you."

"How'd you mean?"

"Oh, just that. I'm bothering about when this cruise is over. That's bothering me a lot. Well, we'll leave it at that for the present."

Satan turned his lantern face to starboard for half a moment to expectorate right over the starboard rail—maybe also to hide a grin.

"I reckon it'll come all right somehow," said he. "We ain't much in the world, but we're straight. Reckon you're straight too. That's all I want. That feller Thelusson, y'rremember I told you he wanted to come for a cruise with us. Well, he was straight enough s'far as dollars went, but I wouldn't have had him on this ship, not if he'd paid me a dollar a minute and a bonus for every knot we made—not with Jude aboard— Here's the wheel for a sec', if you'll take it whiles I get some coffee ready."

Toward noon a wreath of gulls in the sky showed Cormorant.

Jude was at the wheel, Satan forward on the lookout.

Twenty minutes later Satan came running aft, fetched the old glass out of its sling, and went forward with it.

"There's a hooker on the sands!" cried he. "Looks like a small fruiter or suthin' hove up."

Ratcliffe, standing beside him, could see nothing,—the

sand, owing to their low level, was invisible from the deck of the *Sarah*,—then, straining his eyes, he made out a speck on the sea-line.

“Mast’s gone,” said Satan, “white painted, not more’n fifty ton, and she’s layin’ in the lagoon. She must have come in over the sand where it narrows to the westward. There’s a pinch of sand there that’s near under water at flood, and the seas come right over it in an east’ard gale.”

He handed the glass to Ratcliffe.

“Funny,” said Ratcliffe, “if you were right about the *Nombre de Dios* being sunk here and we come to have a look for her and find another wreck.”

“Well, I don’t take no shares in the *Nombre de Dios*,” said Satan. “I ran here more for somewhere to run to than with any thought of the *Nombre*. She’s a hundred foot under the sand if she’s here at all; but it’s luck all the same. There’ll be pickin’s. There was a big blow two weeks ago from the east,—that’s what’s done her,—and the salvage men won’t be here yet, if they ever come.”

He stuck the glass to his eye.

“She’s a yacht, that’s what she is, one of them small cruisers, not more’n fifty or sixty, and her fittin’s will just do for us, if she’s not been stripped. There’s all sorts of folks come from New York and Philadelphia and N’ y’Orleans, cruisin’ about these seas in tubs like that,—fishin’ mostly.”

The *Sarah* held on, almost due south, with the daring of a sea-bird, Satan giving directions to the steersman and seeming absolutely regardless of the death and

dangers around them,—reefs that they shaved, rocks that waved fathom-long ribbons of fuci a few feet under water,—he avoided them all.

South, east, and west Cormorant Cay is devoid of danger. Only here to the north do the reefs and rocks show, and it is just here that the only entrance to the lagoon lies.

The place consists really of two sandspits widely separated to the north so as to form a pondlike harbor running from five to ten fathoms deep. Farther south the sandspits join so as to form a wide street, like the spit to eastward of Lone Reef.

They held on. The sound of the gentle surf on the sands came now, and a full view of the lagoon water reflecting the sun blaze like a mirror.

On the still lagoon, with strange stereoscopic effect seen between the two sand-arms holding off the wrinkled sea, lay the craft, floating on an even keel, and showing a stump of mainmast against the skyline. From her lines she had been a yacht.

"Why, Go' bless my soul, she's anchored!" cried Satan. "Derelic' and anchored. The people must have got away in a boat or suthin'. There's not a sign of them. Port—hard—port—as you were—steady—so!"

He ran to let go the halyards.

Another anchor had been bent on to some spare chain. It was heaved over, and the *Sarah* came up to it, swinging less than fifty yards from the stranger. She was a picture, a forty-ton fishing yawl, white painted, gracile as a fish, dismasted, abandoned, and swinging to a

taut anchor chain; beyond her and the emerald of the lagoon lay the great stretch of sands, running due south, blanketing to the heat and showing ponds of aquamarine and storms of gulls.

The anchor down, Satan stood with his eyes fixed on his prey; Jude too. They seemed considering her as a butcher might consider a carcass before he cut it up.

"Aren't you going to board her?" asked Ratcliffe.

"Have you ever seen a dead b'ar?" asked Satan. "Sometimes a b'ar isn't as dead as he looks, and sometimes a derelic' isn't as empty as it looks. It's a common thing for men on the Florida coast to hide in a driftin' canoe and rise up and laugh at them that come out to collect it. I can't make out that anchor chain bein' down, and I'll just give them one hour whiles we have dinner."

When they came on deck again after the meal, they dropped the dinghy, and the three of them put off for the derelict.

She must have been dismasted outside the sands, for not a spar lay in the water alongside,—dismasted and driven over by a big wave, her crew clinging to her. On the bow was her name, *Haliotis*. They tied up and scrambled on board. The deck ran flush fore and aft. The wheel looked all right, but was jammed and immovable; the binnacle glass was smashed.

Satan stood, whistling and looking about him. Then he dived below, followed by the others. The cabin had been left in good order. It was a bit over-gilded and decorated for a plain man's taste, but everything was of

the best, and a hanging lamp of solid brass still swung over the center-table. The walls were of bird's-eye maple, the cushions of the best blue cloth, and the fittings of the tiny sleeping cabins to match.

There was plenty of stuff lying about,—books, clothes, boots. The people had evidently put off in a hurry, not caring much what they took as long as they got away. Perhaps they had taken advantage of a passing steamer.

Ratcliffe picked up a book, a volume of O. Henry. There was a name in it,—J. Seligmann.

Jude, delving in the starboard after-cabin, came out holding up something. It was a pair of boots, women's, patent leather with white suede tops and heels three inches high.

"Look at them things!" said Jude with a burst of suppressed laughter.

"A girl's boots," said Ratcliffe. "Try them on, Jude."

"If I wore them things," said Jude, "I'd have to walk on my hands. There's dead loads more of stuff, and the place smells as if a polecat had been living there."

Ratcliffe stuck his head into the little cabin. It reeked of California poppy as though a bottle of it had been upset, California poppy and cosmetic scents. Clothes were lying about in disorder; a woman's white yachting cap, deck shoes, lingerie, bursting like froth out of a cabin trunk, gave added touch to the hysterical distraction of the scene.

One could see her, the woman, rushing about saving or collecting her valuables, leaving everything else, and

calling on the gods to witness that she would never set foot again on another small yacht for a pleasure cruise among the islands.

Jude picked out a frilled garment from the lingerie box, looked at it, rolled it up, and cast it with a chuckle into the bunk, then she reached up and opened the little port.

Ratcliffe left her pursuing her investigations, attracted by the whoops of Satan, who seemed pursuing things about the deck.

Satan, with his hair wild and his eyes ablaze, had rapidly sampled his treasure. Everything he wanted had been left. Had he found the *Nombre de Dios* with gold to her hatches, it is doubtful if his excitement would have been so intense.

"Look at that!" cried he, pointing to the mast winch. "Wantin' it—should think I had been! Come along and see!" He led the way to a heap of raffle and broken spars forward. "Look at them gaff jaws, galvanized an' covered with hide, and me with old wooden ones creakin' like an old shoe! There's a mainsheet buffer too! Camper Nicholson's—rubber—cringles—come along to the sail room!"

They went to the sail room, then to the galley,—everywhere finds, glorious finds, with this rough sum total:

In the sail room, sixty fathoms of new manila rope, an eighty-foot otter trawl, harpoons and grains and a seine net, a trysail, square sails, two jibs; in the galley, cooking gear, an Atkey cooking stove to burn coal or coke; in addition to all this some splendid blocks with

patent sheaves with ball bearings which run so much better than dummies, a lower mainsheet block and two quarter-blocks, fathoms of galvanized chain, and two Nicholson's patent anchors. Other things included lamps, a pair of binoculars, a sextant and a chronometer, charts, and lastly, glorious but useless, in a little engine room the auxiliary, a 13-15 horse-power petrol-paraffin Kelvin engine, two-cylinder, with the shaft running out through the quarter, and a spare Bergius propeller, which shuts up and opens out automatically when in motion.

When they came on deck again after a rapid glance at these things a brain-wave came to Ratcliffe.

"Look here!" said he. "Why not tow her back to Havana and claim salvage? She's worth a lot and she's derelict."

"Not me," said Satan. "Have you ever claimed salvage? First there's the tow, and we're underhanded. Then there's the lawyers. What's to stop this Seligmann whoever he is poppin' up an' swearin' against me. He'd say he left her with the anchor down in harbor; it amounts to that, though she's derelict' right enough. Not me! I'll take what I want without no lawyers to help me. She's my meat, by all the laws of the sea, and that's the end of it."

Appeared Jude from the cabin hatch, carrying as a trophy a go-ashore hat she had unearthed from somewhere, a crushed-strawberry-colored straw hat—or was it a bonnet? It had long strings and a rose stuck on one side of it.

"Look what that catawampus has left behind her!" cried Jude.

"Quit your foolin'," cried Satan, "and come along and lend a hand. Here, h'ist these things into the dinghy!"

Jude flung the hat down the open skylight, and the rank burglary of the *Hakotis* began.

CHAPTER XXX

A SECRET OF THE SAND

IT seemed to Ratcliffe in the days that followed that he had never known what work meant before. That he, a wealthy and respected member of the British upper, upper-middle classes, an ex-Christ Churchman, and a member of Boodles, was assisting Satan Tyler in "tearing the tripes" out of another man's yacht, also occurred to him sometimes as a fact, a distorted sort of fact, blurred and dimmed by the blazing and brilliant atmosphere in which they were working, the absolute and shocking loneliness that hemmed them in, Satan's personality, and Jude's companionship.

By all the laws of the sea, according to Satan, these things were the property of the first finder. That was all very well according to Satan, and indeed according to what seemed common-sense; still, sea law was for all he could tell not quite the same thing as the laws of the sea, according to Satan. Though belonging to a great ship-owning family, he knew nothing of the rights of the matter; but the business they were engaged on seemed to him sometimes, when he cared to think, most tremendously like larceny,—larceny excused by a lot of considerations and made picturesque by environment; still, a busi-

ness that in the unpicturesque surroundings of the London Sessions would undoubtedly have appealed to a judge in the voice of Larceny.

Sometimes he imagined a warship, one of those prying, officious little cruisers that do police work, closing up with the cay and sending a boat into the lagoon.

Sometimes he fell to wondering what Seligmann was like,—an American surely, one of the Gulf haunTERS, belonging, most probably, to one of the numerous clubs on the Florida coast, and Mrs. Seligmann—or was it Miss—or not even that?

One thing was certain, Seligmann was rich. They were not robbing a poor man.

At the end of the third day Jude gave out, not from weariness, but from distaste.

"Lord! haven't you had enough of this old truck?" said Jude. "I don't feel's if I ever wanted to see a len'th of rope nor a cringle again."

Ratcliffe felt pretty much the same.

"I'll finish the business myself," said Satan. "You can knock off if you like. Go'n hunt for turkles' eggs."

"I'm going," said Jude.

"I'll come along, too," said Ratcliffe.

Satan ferried them over to the sands. It was about two hours before sundown, and an easterly breeze was blowing fresh and cool, shivering up the lagoon water and whispering among the sand-grains.

Jude walked despondently as they trudged along close to the sea edge and discovering nothing.

"D'you know," said Ratcliffe, "we've never even started

to hunt for a sign of the *Nombre de Dios*? I wonder if she's sunk, really, anywhere near here?"

"I dunno," said Jude; "don't care, nuther. Satan's so full of his pesky old fittings he's no time to think of anything else."

"Cheer up, Jude."

"I'm all right."

"No, you're not. What's wrong?"

"Lots of things."

"When we get back to Havana—" began Ratcliffe. She cut him short.

"I don't want to go back to Havana," said she. "Ain't going."

She sat down on the sands plump, nursed her knees, and stared over the sea, casting her hat beside her. He stood for a moment, then he sat down. He knew at once, knew what had been working in her mind for days.

"You're bothering about what Sellers said, dirty scoundrel! I'd have punched his head, only the whole thing happened so quick and you landed him with that mop—don't worry."

No reply.

"What's the good?" went on Ratcliffe; then cautiously and feeling that he was treading on dangerous ground, "See here, there's no harm in being a girl, no more than there is in being a man."

No reply.

A laughing gull passed and jeered at them. Jude followed it with her eyes. She seemed almost unconscious of his presence and not to have heard his words. He

watched her profile against the sky, noticed the eyelashes which seemed longer and more curved up than ever, the nice shape of the head, free of the old panama.

Then she turned, leaned on her elbow, and looked up at him—then she looked down.

“What made you think I was botherin’ about Sellers?” asked Jude.

“I don’t know,” said Ratcliffe, “I just thought it. I’ve been thinking a lot about you—I care for you a lot, that’s about it.”

She looked up at him again, full in the eyes, and with a new expression he had never seen before, a puzzled, half-startled look, like that of a person suddenly awakened in strange surroundings.

Then her eyes fell away from him.

She took a handful of sand and let the grains fall between her fingers.

“Just that,” said Ratcliffe.

She was still playing with the sand, letting it fall between her fingers carefully as though trying to count the grains. Then she threw the stuff away, brushed the palm of her hand clean, and sat up. Drawing a little closer to her, he put his hand round her waist, just as he had done when they were on the sandspit, and just as on the sandspit, she let it rest there—for a moment. Then, with a queer little laugh, she removed the hand and struggled to her feet.

He rose up and they went on, without a word. Then presently they began to talk about indifferent matters almost as though nothing had occurred.

A SECRET OF THE SAND 287

They found a nest of turtles' eggs, and Jude marked it; farther along they came upon something strange, a sort of platform half-covered with sand. Jude said it was the foretop of a ship sunk and sanded over.

"It's the *Nombre de Dios*, maybe," said Ratcliffe.

"Maybe," said Jude. "It's the foretop of an old ship, anyhow. See, where the mast's broke off—she's thirty or forty foot under that."

"Not much good to us, even if she is the *Nombre de Dios*."

"Not much."

The gulls seemed to agree, and the little waves, falling crystal clear on the beach.

It was near the end of the spit just here, and the sands shelved out, losing themselves in the immeasurable loneliness of the sea stretching to Mariguana and the Caicos and the northern shoulder of South America.

Jude, on her knees with a bit of driftwood, was scraping away the sand from the edge of the sunk foretop, when something caught her eye.

A turtle had landed where they had marked the eggs. It was so far away that it did not look bigger than a threepenny bit.

She flung the bit of driftwood away, rose to her feet, and started running, taking the extreme sea-edge where the sand was hard. Ratcliffe followed. They were half a minute too late, the turtle turning back to the sea and leaving them spent and laughing. She got down on her knees and hived the eggs in her hat, still laughing. He helped, filling his hat and his pockets, and then they

started for the lagoon edge, Jude suddenly in the wildest spirits. He had never seen her in such high, good spirits. When they got aboard it was just the same. Even Satan's maniacal passion for old junk, expressed at supper in the determination to spend two more days picking and scraping at the *Halotis*, did not depress her, it only made her laugh.

"You'll be cryin' before you've done if you go on laughin' like that," said Satan. "What's possessed you eh?"

Sure enough she was. The words acted like a pin or a bubble.

She flushed, pushed her plate away, half rose, and then sat down again.

"You're always going on at me! Whatch'a want me to do? If I'm crying, I ought to be laughin', an' if I'm laughin' I ought to be crying! I'll laugh as much as I want—"

Then, logically, she broke into violent tears, rose, and ran on deck.

"What the hell-nation's the matter with her?" asked Satan.

"I don't know," replied Ratcliffe.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE GO-ASHORE HAT

HE had time to think over the matter as he lay in his bunk that night.

He fell to wondering, among other things, what the spell was that drew him toward Jude and held him.

Was it the indefinable attractive quality that had made her mother a "nachelor calamity" where men were concerned, or just the power of youth? Scarcely the latter. He had met lots of youth in his time, and it had not attracted him much; besides, when you have only to look into the looking-glass to see youth, it is at a discount.

Puzzling over the matter, he came to the bedrock fact that Jude, in some extraordinary way, had the power to make him feel more alive than he had ever felt before.

Leaving other things aside, there were an honesty, faithfulness, and simplicity about Jude that removed her from the category of bifurcated beings and raised her to the level of a dog.

Instinct told him that this compound quality was worth more than all the gold lying under the hatches of the *Nombre de Dios*, more than all the diamonds in the Rand, when combined with that other quality speaking in

her level gaze,—steadfastness, the something that would make her keep the wheel in all weathers.

But these excellencies would have been nothing without the impossibilities with which they were allied,—social and conventual impossibilities. The one reacted on the other, making an irresistible whole combined with the something else that was Jude.

He remembered the queer little laugh with which she had freed herself from his hand round her waist—then he fell asleep and dreamt that he and Jude and a lot of larrikins were lying in wait by a harbor blue as the sea off Jamaica, to clod bathing nigger girls; then he was chasing Jude round and round a tree, only to catch her and find that she was Carquinez.

When he got on deck next morning he found the ship deserted. The others were away on the sandbank, and he amused himself by fishing till they returned.

Jude showed no traces of the tears of the last night, and Satan was elated. He had been examining the wreck-wood, and his experienced eye backed the declaration of Jude. It was the foretop of a ship, right enough, and, a hundred to one, so he declared, the foretop of the *Nombre*.

Ratcliffe, wondering vaguely why he seemed so pleased over the find, considering the sand conditions, asked him the chances of raising her. Then said Satan, seeming to turn his gaze inward upon his awful and profound knowledge of the sea and its ways:

“If you was to get all the dridgers from H’vana to Pensacola and dridged till your eyes bugged out o’ your

head an' your tongue hanged down to your heels, you wouldn't clear her—siltin'—but she's a sure enough mug trap."

"How do you mean?"

"Why, with that story and that chart an' that old foretop, I could set half Havana diggin' like dogs for a bone, to say nothin' of private parties an' syndikits an' such things—maybe I will, too, some day."

They put out after breakfast for the *Haliotis* and another load of "old junk." Satan rowed back with it, leaving Jude and Ratcliffe on board,—Ratcliffe collecting things forward, and Jude grubbing about in the saloon.

Having collected the odds and ends in a heap, he turned his eyes to the *Sarah*. Satan, having tied up the dinghy, was busy transshipping his plunder. Then the beauty of the morning sea flooding into the lagoon, held him for a moment. He followed the gulls in their flight, noted the sudden break from emerald to ultramarine deepening to purple, and beyond the reefs the sudden glitter of a leaping fish. Then he remembered Jude down below.

He came to the companionway and down the stairs.

The cabin was brilliant with sunlight, with water reflections through the open portholes playing on the ceiling and polished maple and venesta of the walls. Across a pile of truck and bunk bedding heaped on the table he caught a glimpse of the upper part of Jude.

Jude, fancying herself entirely alone, and yielding to some prompting or other, had picked up the despised

go-ashore hat and put it on; she was looking at herself in the mirror fixed to the after bulkhead. She was looking at herself with her head now straight and now tilted slightly to one side; then the head turned, but she did not see Ratchiffe: her eyes were still fixed on the hat, she was looking at it sidewise.

All her unconscious movements might have been those of a lady in a milliner's shop trying on a hat in a critical spirit.

She had not heard him coming down the companion-way, owing to the fact that he was in his bare feet, and she did not hear him go up again.

On deck he took his seat on an old box upended close to the mainmast stump, and considered the thing he had just witnessed in a philosophical spirit.

It was like seeing a chrysalis crack and a butterfly's wing protruding.

If Jude had not been admiring herself in that hat, then sight was a liar and its evidence worthless. But Jude was as honest as the day. She had greeted the thing with derision, brought it on deck to show as an object of mirth, and flung it down the skylight opening with contempt—yesterday morning.

What had happened since then to make her consider the thing at all, let alone wear it before a looking-glass?

Had she put it on in derision and to see what a guy she looked? Not a bit! She had made friends with that hat! Those few movements of the head spoke of consideration not derision, in a language old as the earliest feather headdress and more universal than Esperanto.

Then he remembered last evening on the sandspit and her sudden passage from despondency to high spirits; he remembered her queer little laugh as she removed his hand from round her waist,—had that been the sound of the rift coming in the chrysalis casing?

For a moment he almost yielded to the desire to go below and see if the butterfly had really arrived. Then he checked himself. There was time, plenty of time; besides, Satan was putting off again in the dinghy for another load.

Satan, over this business, like a man in drink or a lunatic, had his hot fits and cold fits. A hot fit had suddenly come on him.

The petrol-paraffin engine had begun suddenly to shout to him that it must be taken. A glorious idea, too, had evolved itself in his brain,—why not fit it to the *Sarah*; not there in the lagoon, of course, but in some port? All that was required would be some structural alterations and a shaft-hole in the quarter; he reckoned the fitting would cost under three hundred dollars.

He didn't want the thing, really,—masts and sails were good enough for his pottering-about work,—it was the passion of a woman for jewelry. The *Sarah* would be a nobbier boat with an auxiliary,—sea swank, purely, exhibiting the only apparent weak spot in his character.

That spare Bergius propeller had begun revolving in his mind days ago,—“thrud—thrud—thrud! See me drive the *Sarah*, see me drive the *Sarah*!” He had examined the propeller already attached and found the blades all broken. The shaft was intact, and, beaching

the *Haliotis* stern on in that quiet lagoon, it would have been possible to fit on the spare one and take her off unmastered, as she was under her own motive power.

He had a vague notion of the structure of engines and Yankee ingenuity enough to have driven her, but the fact of her anchor being down, as before stated, and the fact that he had already "torn the tripe" out of her plundered the sail room and the store room, removed brasswork that would have taken weeks to replace, and generally left her like a scooped cheese, prevented any idea of salvage.

Taking the *Haliotis* into port he would have to declare her like a box of cigars,—a box of cigars belonging to another man and half the cigars gone.

Coming over the rail, Ratcliffe saw the new light in his eye and wondered what it portended.

"I've been thinkin'," said Satan, taking his stand by the mast stump and surveying the heap of stuff collected by the other, "I've been thinkin' it's tomfoolery to leave the engine."

Jude, brought up by the sound of the dinghy coming alongside, appeared at the saloon companionway. She wore no hat.

"Good Lord!" said Ratcliffe, aghast. "You don't mean to say—but it's impossible. We haven't the means to take it."

"There's enough of the mast left to rig a tackle to," said Satan, "and that hatch leads right down to the engine place. The heavy fittin's are easy raised from the

bed-plates, and they're not too heavy to go in the dinghy. We can tow her with the c'lapsible."

"But what can you do with the thing?"

"Fit her to the *Sarah*, of course."

"Here, in the lagoon?" asked the horrified Ratcliffe.

"Well, I wouldn't mind if I had the hands and the tools for the job," replied Satan. "Naw, it's beyond me. I'll have to take her to a port to have it done,—not Havana, neither: there's too many eyes in Havana and people that know my business. Vera Cruz is the place. I know a Spanish yard there'll do the job."

"The year after next," put in Jude, "supposing you *do* manage to get it aboard, you know what the dagoes are, and you'll knock the inside of the *Sarah* to flinders. She won't be the same boat with that old traction injin in her—I wish we'd never struck this cay!"

She sat down on the combing of the skylight and folded her hands. Ratcliffe had never seen her do that before. He stood torn between two things,—the desire to please Satan and the desire to please Jude. Pulling on the side of Jude there was also the sure foreknowledge of the heavy work that would be required. That did not frighten him; but it did seem to him that they had done enough and ought to be satisfied. It was like burglars going for the kitchen boiler after having removed the plate, furniture, and very bed-linen of a house.

All the same he could not but admire Satan. Time was pressing, it was quite possible that a salvage boat might poke her nose into the lagoon at any moment.

Satan knew this as well as he, yet it did not move him.

"It's not a dago yard," said Satan, evading the traction engine dig, "it's French, and I've been wanting an auxiliary for years. Pap was with me, only he was awful slow over business, and here's one for nix. I'm goin' down to have a look at her."

He dived below.

Jude sat brooding.

"Never mind," said Ratcliffe. "It's not a big engine, and he and I will be able to do it with a tackle. I'm not going to let him put you to work on it."

"I'm not bothering about that," said Jude fatefully. "It's when it's fixed up I'm thinking of."

"How?"

"He'll make me drive the durned thing."

"No, he won't."

"What's to stop him?"

"Oh, lots of things—leave it to me."

He was cut short by Satan's voice calling him to come below. Down below he had to follow all sorts of details pointed out, details proving the desirability of the prize and the miraculous ease of its removal.

Then they came on deck and put off for dinner. But Satan was never destined to lift that engine. Fate had fixed it to its bed-plates more securely than screws and nuts could hold it.

CHAPTER XXXII

CLEARY!

DINNER was over and Jude had run up on deck. Suddenly her voice came down through the open skylight.

"Below there! Cleary's coming!"

Satan jumped from his place like a man shot. Next moment he was on deck. Jude pointed and handed him the binoculars she had been using.

"That's them!" said Satan, after a long look. "Cuss the swabs!"

He handed the glasses to Ratcliffe.

Away to the north two sails cut the sea-line. With the aid of the glasses two vessels leaped into view,—a topsail schooner and a smaller vessel of fore-and-aft rig. Even with the glasses he could not have been sure that these were the *Natches* and the *Juan* like a pair of evil dogs hunting in company; but Satan was sure, so was Jude.

"They're coming dead for the cay," said Jude. Satan said nothing.

He had been filling his pipe when the hail came, he lit it now, walked to the starboard rail to be alone, and stood with his eyes fixed on the *Haliotis*.

The position was as bad as could be. First of all, these ruffians would be sure to make him bail up even more than he had had out of them; secondly, they would have the laugh at him and post him as a mug all over Havana; thirdly, they would give him away about the *Haliotis*, if they discovered how he had plundered her.

Having smoked for a moment in silence, he turned to his companions.

It was a boast of Satan's that he had never lost a spar, a fact partly due to luck, partly to his foreseeing eye; like a good general, he had plans for all eventualities.

"They won't be in the lagoon for a couple of hours," said he, "with this wind and all. Come on aboard the old tub."

"What are you going to do?" asked Jude. "Sink her at her moorings?"

"No time; besides, they'd see her on the lagoon floor. It's up anchor and let her drift on the sands."

"What's the good of that?"

"Oh, Lord! Don't stand jibberin'! I've got my plan. Into the dinghy with you!"

They rowed over to the *Haliotis*.

The one thing that Satan had not coveted was, mercifully, the winch; it was of the type of the West Country winch, and not a spot on Pap's patent, at least in Satan's eyes.

They set to, got the anchor in, secured it, and rowed back to the *Sarah*. Then they watched the *Haliotis* drift. The tide was going out. She was close to the eastern

arm of the spit, and that arm had a bend in it toward the narrowing entry.

Satan reckoned she would take the sand a hundred yards or so from the entry, and he reckoned right.

But they had no time to watch her. The deck of the *Sarah* was lumbered with stuff that had to be stowed out of sight. It took an hour before everything was shipshape and snug, and by that time the oncomers were close in, their sails big bellied with the wind, beating up for the entrance.

They came through, the *Juan* leading, the *Natches* some two cable lengths behind; then, with canvas threshing and the gulls yelling round them, they dropped their anchors, the *Juan* to starboard of the *Sarah* and the *Natches* farther up the lagoon. Ratcliffe had expected demonstrations of hostility: there were none.

They could see Sellers directing the fellows forward, and they could make out Cleary on the deck of the *Natches*. Then they saw Sellers drop below, and through the binoculars they could see Cleary as though he were only a few yards off,—he was smoking and giving orders to the hands. Then he came and spat over the rail and stood looking toward the *Sarah* with his eyes shaded; having finished this inspection, he too dropped below.

"I'd a sight sooner they'd shook their fists at us," said Satan. "They know they've got us, sure."

Then Sellers reappeared on the deck, and the *Juan* dropped a boat.

"Here he is," said Jude, "and whether he's got us or

whether he hasn't, he ain't coming aboard this ship!"

She ran forward and fetched the mop from the hole where it was stowed.

"Let up!" said Satan. "I don't want no fightin': I tell you, I've got a plan; I don't want no mops in it."

"He ain't coming aboard," said Jude.

As the boat of the *Juan* came alongside, Sellers, in the sternsheets, raised his hand in a lordly fashion and slightly, as befitted a superior taking notice of an inferior.

"Hullo, Satar!" cried Sellers as the bow oar hooked on.

"Hullo, yourself!" replied Satan. "What you doin' down here away?"

"Tell you when I get aboard," said Sellers. "Why, there's the kid! Hullo, Kid!"

"Claws off!" cried Jude. "You try to come aboard and I'll land you with this mop! You can talk from the boat."

Sellers sat down again in the sternsheets.

"She won't let you aboard," said Satan, speaking as though Jude were not present. "You shouldn't have sassed her the way you did over there at Lone."

"I'm sure I beg your pardon," said Sellers. "I'm trooly sorry to have trod on a female's sussuptibilities; but what I'm wishin' to say is this, and it's as easy said from here as on deck: You've got to come aboard the *Juan*, you and that thousand dollars you've had from Cark, to say nothin' of the coin you've had from Cleary, an' be tried by C't Martial, an' take your sentence. If

you don't, I'll board you, me and Cleary, an' go through your ship, an' fling the lot of you in the lagoon—d'you take me? I'm not funnin'."

"I'll come," said Satan. "I want to have a talk with Cark anyhow."

"And he wants to have a talk with you."

"Right. Off you go, and I'll follow."

"Swab!" said Jude, "are you going to pay them that thousand dollars back? I'd sooner chuck it in the lagoon!"

"I'd pay a thousand dollars to see Cark done in the eye," replied Satan. "Where's the damage? I've hived more than two thousand dollars' worth of stuff off that blistered derelic'. You leave them cusses to me."

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE FIGHT

AS they watched Sellers pulling back they saw the *Juan* drop a boat.

"Hullo!" said Satan.

He put the glass to his eye.

"Cark's coming off. He's in the sternsheets, him and his patch—what's up now?"

The two boats approached one another, and then hung together, evidently in consultation. Then the oars took the water and they approached the *Sarah*, Sellers leading. Satan, who had found a piece of chewing-gum in his pocket, put it into his mouth and began to chew, leisurely, like a cow on her cud, while he watched the approaching boats.

"What you want?" shouted Satan when they were in speaking distance.

"Cark says you're to come aboard right now," replied Sellers. "You've played him one trick, and he don't want you to play him another."

"Oh, don't he?"

"No, he don't."

Satan spat into the water alongside and leaned comfortably on the rail. Carquinez was as close to the *Sarah*

as Sellers, yet he spoke no word, leaving his deputy to do the talking, and contenting himself with making occasional birdlike noises.

"Well," said Satan, ruffled, for all his appearances of calm, "you can tell him I'll come when I want to, and that won't be before tomorrow morning, for his damn cheek! Ahoy there, Cark! Ain't you got a tongue in your head?"

"He's like a blessed canary bird," cut in Jude. "Hi, there, Sellers! what you done with the cage?"

"Is that your ultermatum?" demanded Sellers, ignoring Jude and addressing Satan.

"My which matum?"

"Is that all you gotta say?"

"Oh, Lord, no!" said Satan.

"Well, then, out with it!"

Ratcliffe had never seen Satan "het up" till now, as, straightening himself and gripping the rail, he let out:

"Gotta say? Why, if I'm sayin' from now to the end o' next week, I couldn't say the beginnin' of my opinion of you, right from the truck of Cleary's old cod boat to the keel o' that old disgrace you ripped of her guts when she was a yacht—you an' your crew of cockroaches an' dagoes—right from the soles of Cleary's flat feet to the end of your bottle nose—you and your ultermatum!

"That's all. I haven't time to be wastin' on you. I'll come if I have a mind to and when I want, without waitin' for your orders—now scatter yourselves!"

"Right," said Sellers.

He gave an order to the boat's crew, and the boat turned, and, followed by Carquinez, made back to the *Juan*.

Satan, his hand on the rail, watched them, still chewing.

Not a word spoke he, the bulge in his cheek steadfast against the skyline and his eyes fixed on the boats.

Then he suddenly turned.

"Them thugs will try to board us now," said Satan. "We've gotta fight. There's Cleary puttin' off, and we'll have the whole Noah's ark on us in two ticks. We've gotta get the ammunition ready."

"There are guns down below," said Ratcliffe.

"Guns!" said Satan. "God bless you, we don't want no guns! Cark's too frightened of the law to let any of his men use knives or pistols. Jude, where's that tub of stinkin' bait—you haven't hove it over, have you?"

"Nope."

"Cart it along. Rat, fetch up them five bottles of whisky,—they're better'n bumshells,—and there's an old fryin' pan in the galley with a hole in it. Fetch it with the rest. There's nothin' like a fryin' pan for beltin' people—you can't miss. What you gettin' at Jude?"

"The mop," said Jude. "I don't want nothing better for sweepin' up rubbish!"

"Well, maybe; but they'll fight better'n you think. Lord! if I only had a roll of barb wire! Here they come! Hurry up, Rat!"

The three boats, Sellers and Cleary leading, were in motion and making for the *Juan*.

"We've only two to reckon with," said Satan, as Ratcliffe arrived, Jude helping him up with the ammunition. "Cark won't join in: he's too frightened of his skin. Now then, ready with your weapons!"

He was right. Cark's boat, half a cable-length away, backed water while the redoubtable Cleary and Sellers rushed like hawks on the prey, aiming to board the *Sarah* to starboard, Cleary forward, Sellers aft.

But the men at the oars were not used to this sort of work. In their enthusiasm and despite the curses of their captains, they held on too long, nearly smashed the boat's bows against the side of the *Sarah*, and fell into wild confusion trying to get their oars in under the bombardment from the deck. Over the clamor of the gulls rose the shrill curses and shouts of the dagoes, the whooping of Satan, the smashing of bottles, while over all the perfume of bad fish and poisonous whisky rose like the fume of the fight; but the attackers held, held by teeth and claws and boathooks, while the wily Carquinez, on the fringe of the fight, voiceful for once, standing up and clutching his coat together, shouted directions—unheeded as unheard.

Twice Sellers was almost on board, and twice Jude's mop sent him head over heels back; but now Cleary had made good forward, backed by two of his crew, and while Jude, rushing to Ratcliffe's aid, drove him back with the mop in the pit of his stomach, Sellers, eyes shut, head down, and fighting Satan like a mad bull, gained the deck, gripped Satan, slipped, fell, and rolled with him in the scuppers. Three dagoes had followed

Sellers and flung themselves like dogs on the strugglers; but now Jude and Ratcliffe, free for a moment, flung themselves on the dagoes, broke the fight, freed Satan, and sent the whole lot bundling over, Sellers and all—only to find that Cleary had made good again, and after Cleary half his boat's crew.

Led by Satan, who had seized the frying pan, the defenders hurled themselves on Cleary.

Satan was right, you can't miss with a frying pan. Cleary went down before it. Ratcliffe, using only his fists, had floored the biggest of the dagoes, and the rest were crowding back helter skelter, when a shout from Sellers, who had regained the deck, brought the battle to a pause.

"Stop fightin', you damn fools!" cried Sellers.

"Lord! Look!" cried Jude.

The port side of the *Sarah* was turned to the entrance of the lagoon, and into the lagoon was gliding a long, lean destroyer, shearing the blue-green water from her fore foot.

Being to starboard, the attackers had not seen her, and the men on deck had been too busy.

Carquinez alone had sighted her. The effect was magical. Peace fell like a suddenly dropped dish-cover, and over the rail came Carquinez and half a dozen more Spaniards from the boats.

"Now we're done!" said Sellers. "She's a Britisher, and this damn sandbank's British and we'll be had to the Bahamas Courts o' Inquiry and Lord knows what all. Referred to Havana for inquiries. They've seen

us at it, no use in denyin' it. Look at them cusses' bloody noses and Cleary flattened out. Kick him alive, some of you fools! Here they come!"

The destroyer had cast anchor and dropped a boat. With the terrible precision of a hawk or a warship closing on its prey, she was on to the *Sarah*. A blue and gold man held the yoke lines, and the oars of the rowers rowed like one.

"Look at that image on the sternsheets," said Sellers.

"Leave him to me," said Satan.

"What's your game?"

"Shut your head! Here he is!"

The boat came alongside. The oars rising like one, fell with a crash, the bow oar hooked on, and over the rail came a sublieutenant of the British Navy, smooth of face and neat as though just taken from a bandbox.

"What the devil are you fellows up to, fighting here?" asked the sublieutenant.

Satan broke into a laugh.

"We're movie men," said Satan.

"You're what?"

"Movin' pictures."

"Oh—cinematograph?"

"That's it."

Ratcliffe, fired with admiration for this Satanic move, joined in laughing.

"Did you think we were fighting, really? Well, that's funny. What's the name of your ship?"

"The *Albatross*," replied the sublieutenant, completely and roundly taken in. "You're English, aren't you?"

"Yes, I'm English. Joined the show some time ago."

"What's that hooker on the sand over there?"

"Oh, that's part of our show. Boat supposed to have been wrecked—these chaps are pirates."

"Jolly good make-up!" said the other, surveying the pirates and taking in Cark, also Cleary, who, resuscitated in time, was leaning over the rail chewing and spitting into the water.

The awful question, "Where's your camera?" never came. If it had, Satan would no doubt have met it; but the sublieutenant was new to this sort of business and not on the hunt for evidence. The thing was palpable and plain. No complaint came from the attacked, and attacked and attackers were all seemingly friends. The words "cinematograph company" covered the situation completely.

He gave a few words of information about the *Albatross*. She had put in for a small repair and would be off again tomorrow morning. Then he dropped into his boat and the incident was closed.

"Now, you cusses," said Satan, "see where you have landed yourselves! Where'd you have been only for me?"

"Well, I don't deny you slipped the hood over that Britisher pretty smart," said Sellers.

Cleary turned his head and looked at Sellers. "You don't deny! Why, you bloody barnacle scraper, I told you to hold off from the business! Satan, I forgive you that clap on the head. Lord love me! I'll never carry a derringer again. Give me a fryin' pan, that'

the weppin; you can't dodge it no more than you can dodge a thunderstorm."

"Well," said Satan, "fryin' pan back the lot of you, and I'll be on board the *Juan* inside half an hour and settle my business with you. If Cark had kept his mouth shut instead of givin' me orders, we'd have finished it by now and no heads broke."

"We'll be waiting for you," said Sellers.

They tumbled into the boats and rowed off.

"They never drew a knife," said Ratcliffe.

"Oh, Cark took their knives from them," said Satan.

"He didn't want no blood spillin' and trouble,—too much afraid of the law."

Jude, who had collapsed sitting-wise on the deck, began to laugh hysterically.

"What are you laughin' at?" demanded Satan.

"I dunno," said Jude.

CHAPTER XXXIV

"I'LL TAK!"

TEN minutes later Satan and Ratcliffe boarded the *Juan*. Cleary was already on board, down in the cabin with the others; Cark and a bottle of gin were presiding at one end of the table. Satan, with a nod to the company, came to the table and took his seat, motioning Ratcliffe to take the seat opposite to him.

It was like a meeting of a board of directors, and the table just held the six comfortably.

What followed struck the unaccustomed Ratcliffe with astonishment,—the amiability of it,—it might have been a card party, with Satan the loser—momentarily.

"Well, gentlemen," said Satan, "what's to pay?"

There were extra glasses on the table and a box of cigars. The cigars were pushed along by Sellers as he spoke.

"There's Cark's loss of time," said Sellers, "not to say mine and Cleary's. We tried for you round Rum Cay when you gave us the slip, and then there was the run down here. A thousand dollars to us that means, and five hundred to Cleary."

"Makin' it two thousand five hundred and forty," said Satan. "I'm agreeable—and the derelic' is mine."

"Which derelic'?" asked Sellers innocently.

Satan, absolutely disdainng to reply, lit a cigar.

"She's worth all ten thousand dollars," said he, "and what's the salvage on that?"

"Y'mean that old dismasted catboat stuck on the sand there?" said Cleary. "Not worth five—b'sides she's our meat."

Satan dropped Sellers and turned to Carquinez. "You'll maybe explain," said he. "You know the rights of the law. If you try to collar that hooker, I'll come in with first claim, and here's a gentleman will back me in law expenses. You know him,—Mr. Ratcliffe, Holt & Ratcliffe."

"I'll back you," said Ratcliffe.

"And it seems to me law is not your lay, Cark," went on Satan. "We came in here yesterday and boarded and claimed that hooker, and I was fixing the tackle for towing when you blew along. The thing's as clear as paint. She's ours for salvage, and you're not in it."

"Look here!" began Sellers violently—then he closed up: Cark had given him a kick under the table. Then there was silence for a moment, during which these two scoundrels seemed to brood together telepathically.

Then Cark spoke, addressing Satan.

"Will you take the air on deck for wan moment with your friend?" said Cark.

"Sure," said Satan.

A few minutes later they were called down again.

"See here," said Sellers, acting as spokesman for the

others, "we don't want to bear hard on you, but we've been at a big loss over this business."

"And who let you in for it?" asked Satan. "Haven't you been chasin' me since last fall over the *Nombre*? Was it my fault she weren't there?"

"Well, anyhow we're losers. But I'm coming to the derelic'. You'll never be able to do the tow with the *Sarah*—why, the *Sarah* ain't bigger than her, and you're underhanded anyhow."

"That's so," said Satan.

"Well, what I propose is this," said Sellers. "We'll drop claims for the run down here and only ask a thousand and forty of you, and you drop claims on the derelic'."

Satan laughed.

"Maybe you don't know she's got an auxiliary in her worth four thousand dollars if it's worth a cent. She's broke her propeller, but she's got a spare one on board, and if I knew anythin' of injins I'd drive her back on her own power. No, I sticks to the derelic' if that's the best you can offer and here's your dollars—though I'll have to give you my check for the extra money."

He produced a bundle; then, with his hand on it:

"If you choose to take the derelic' for what she's worth and call it quits, I'll trade, one or the other. I'm not set on that tow. But there you are; you know the chances."

"I'll tak!" suddenly broke in Carquinez, and the business was ended.

PART III



CHAPTER XXXV

THE VANISHED LIGHT

A WEEK later, toward sundown, the *Sarah* came up the half-mile channel and dropped her hook in Havana Harbor close to the old anchorage of the *Maine*. A Royal Mail boat passing out gave her the kick of its wash as she settled down to her moorings, a customs boat dropped alongside, and the customs men, hailing Satan as a friend and brother, came aboard and transacted business with him in the cabin. The wind blew warm, bringing scents and sounds across the vast harbor, fluttering the flags of the shipping, and Ratcliffe, standing at the rail, dazzled by the brilliance of the scene before him, knew that his cruise was over.

It was like coming to the end of a book,—a volume suddenly handed to him by Fate to read, and of which he was condemned to write the sequel.

He remembered the morning at Palm Island when he boarded the *Sarah* first, and the picture was still fresh in his mind of the *Haliotis* as they had left her in the lagoon at Cormorant, Sellers and Cleary and their men swarming about her and tinkering her up. They intended to ship the spare propeller and bring her along

under her own motive power to the nearest port, Nassau in the Bahamas.

They had been so busy with the engines and the hull that they had never noticed how completely she had been stripped. They were unconscious of the fact that she had been left with her anchor down—unfortunates! He could still see them like ants laboring in the sun, at the task set to them by the grimly humorous Satan.

Satan had won the game they had forced on him, holding, as he did, a thousand and forty dollars, the "tripes" of the *Haliotis*, and the secret of the mug trap, to be disposed of, perhaps, later on for a consideration. Satan would, no doubt, set other unfortunates digging for the *Nombre* just as he had set Cleary and Sellers tinkering and towing at the *Haliotis*, just as he had held up freighters for a bunch of bananas, just as he had made Thelusson and his crew careen and scrape the *Sarah*, just as he had made Ratcliffe an accomplice in his plans and a handy man to help him in his works; yet the funny thing about the scamp was the fact that he was absolutely dependable, when not dealing with companies or governments or derelicts. Ratcliffe would have trusted him with his last penny.

Dependable if you took hold of him by his handle and not by his cutting edge! Trustable if you trusted him!

Then Jude came up in her harbor rig; that is to say, boots and a coat.

"Satan's clacking away with the customs an' the port doctor man," said Jude. "You can't see across the cabin

with the smoke, and I had to change my rig in the galley."

"You going ashore?" asked Ratcliffe.

"No," said Jude, "Satan's going. I've got to keep ship. You going with him?"

"I suppose so."

Appeared Satan, followed by the port men, who tumbled into the boat and rowed off.

"Goin' ashore?" asked Satan. "Well, I'll row you to the wharf after I've had a bite of supper. Jude'll bring the boat back, and we can get a shore boat off for half a dollar."

Half an hour later, just as the electrics were springing alive and the anchor lights of the shipping marking the dusk blue sky, they started. They stood on the wharf steps for a moment watching Jude row off, then they turned to the town.

Havana smells different from any other seaport. She smells of rum and garlic and dirt and cigars and the earth of Cuba, which is different from the earth anywhere else. The harbor and the town exchange bouquets; the negroes help; Spanish cigarettes, Florida water and decaying vegetables lend a hand. Satan led the way. He knew the place as well as the inside of his pocket, and as he trudged along beside Ratcliffe under the electrics across plazas, or through short-cut cut-throat-looking byways, he pointed out the notable features of the place,—Dutch Pete's, the Alvarez factory, the great opera house, the Calle Commacio, the cathedral.

They passed Florion's with its marble tables, drinkers, and domino players, and Satan suddenly hove to.

"Where d'you want to go now?" said Satan. "D'you want drinks?"

"No, I don't want drinks," said Ratcliffe. "Come over here."

A blazing cinema palace shone across the way, and they entered, Ratcliffe paying.

The place was in black darkness. A cowboy shooting up a bar was on the screen, and a man with an electric torch led them to their seats.

Then they sat watching the pictures, Satan criticizing the actors sometimes, and in a loud voice and not always favorably. The cowboy shot himself off the screen, the lights flared up for half a minute, went out, and the pictures resumed.

Ratcliffe felt a nudge, and in the darkness Satan's voice, muted now, came in his ear.

"Say," whispered Satan, "did you see him?"

"Who?"

"The man that dropped you at Pa'm Island."

"Skelton!"

"That's him. He's sittin' right a front of you."

"Are you sure?"

"Sure as sure."

Skelton here! But where, then, was the *Dryad*? Had he wrecked her, or what?

The words of Satan seemed to alter everything, from the music to the picture of John Bunny on the screen.

The darkness, filled with native Havana scents, became

tinged with the atmosphere of British Respectability. Skelton at the pictures! Why, he ought to have been at the opera or one of the theaters or walking on the *alameda* digesting his dinner and thinking of Tariff Reform or Anglicanism. It seemed impossible; yet when the light flared up again there was Skelton, sure enough, sitting with another man, and now he was rising, evidently tired of the show, and passing out, followed by his friend, grave as though he had been attending his mother's funeral instead of the marriage of John Bunny to Flora Finch in a Pullman car with negro accompaniments.

He wore evening clothes, covered by a light overcoat. Ratcliffe rose and, followed by Satan, pursued him, touching him on the shoulder outside and in the full blaze of the lamps.

"Good God!" said Skelton. "Ratcliffe!"

"Just got in," said Ratcliffe. "Had a ripping time. Where's the *Dryad*?"

"Up at the wharf, coaling," replied Skelton, absorbing Ratcliffe's rough and ready garb, the cloth cap he was wearing, and Satan. "I'm staying at the Matanzas; but I go aboard tomorrow morning, and we're off in the evening. What have you been doing with yourself?"

"Oh, having no end of fun. We found an old treasure ship and blew her up and found she was full of skulls and bones. You know Satan?"

Skelton, who had ignored Satan, acknowledged his existence by a little nod.

"Who's your friend?" asked Ratcliffe, glancing at

Skelton's companion, who had removed himself a few paces.

"Ponsonby—diplomatic service. See here, come on board to lunch tomorrow—one-fifteen."

"Right."

"I have some gear of yours."

"Right. I'll see about it."

"'Night."

"'Night."

Off he went.

They had seen enough of the pictures, and having no inclination for cafés or taverns or gambling shops they made back toward the wharves, Satan walking in profound silence, Ratcliffe thinking.

The whole evening he had been followed by a miserable sort of half-depression. It had attached itself to him first on the deck of the *Sarah*, born of his return to civilization; it had managed to decolorize the past few weeks and demagnetize Jude.

His conscious mind had never quite gauged the hold that Jude had managed to get upon him, and this subconscious devil, rising at the touch of civilization, like a gas bubble from his conventional past, had burst, with spoiling effect, robbing the *Sarah* of her romance and sea-charm and the past few weeks of their brightness. Jude had dimmed with everything else, become part and parcel of what seemed an illusion.

It was while sitting at the pictures, in black darkness, with knowledge of Skelton's presence, that the atmosphere began to clear, the waves to beat again on Cor-

THE VANISHED LIGHT 291

morant Cay, the gulls to fly and call—and Jude come back to life.

He heard again that queer little laugh of hers as she removed his hand. He felt again the warm body that had rested confidently against him away there on the sandspit.

And then she was out on the black harbor alone in the *Sarah*, while he and Satan were watching the pictures! Suppose some lumbering sailing craft being towed to her moorings or some incoming mailboat were to smash into the *Sarah*—and they were to row off and find nothing—no Jude?

The thought almost made him rise from his seat to leave the place. But he could not explain to Satan; so he sat on till the lights flared out. And all the time, mocking the pictures on the screen, came pictures of Jude, all sunlit, real, fresh as herself!

Then, as they pursued their way to the wharf after leaving Skelton, the impatience increased; the darkness of the night, the blaze of the town, the gay life of the streets, and the revelry of the cafés seemed sinister and banded in a conspiracy against him and the lonely little figure of Jude. The indifference of Skelton, the way he had gone hurriedly off, the way he had ignored Satan, were part of the business, blended with the blazing cafés, the moving crowd of Chinks, colored men, Spaniards, and Americans, the brilliance and gaiety without heart, that seemed like a barrier between him and the humble little *Sarah* and Jude away out there in the darkness alone—waiting for him! It came to him that Jude

was the one sole thing he wanted in the cruel, cold, electric-lit world—and he had left her!

They passed through narrow streets like the streets in an evil dream and blazing streets hideous with noise. Then at last they reached the wharf with its amber lights spilling on the black waving water. Satan hired a boat, and they put off, two dagoes rowing and Satan at the yoke-lines.

The *Sarah* was anchored a mile out, and the vast three-mile harbor, vague in the starlight and circled by the hills, seemed to Ratcliffe more immense than when seen by daylight.

Lights, lights everywhere,—scattered lights of shipping, some near, some far away, gem-crueted bulks that were great liners at anchor, songs and voices, and the creak of the oars in the rowlocks! Then a sudden green, red, and white light ahead and a fussy and furious little tug that nearly ran them down and left them rocking in her wash.

“Scowbankers!” said Satan. Then: “I can’t make out the light of the *Sarah*, nohow.”

A clutch came to Ratcliffe’s heart, the clutch of something cold and malign which had seemed following him ever since Skelton’s presence had made itself felt like an evil omen.

They were so far out now that the sounds of the town and wharves had died to nothing; but still the creak of the oars in the rowlocks kept on. Then came Satan’s voice:

THE VANISHED LIGHT 298

"That's her, over beyond them three lights on the starboard bow."

Ratcliffe breathed again, and his heart leaped in him as he picked out the light.

Satan altered their course.

"Are you sure?" asked Ratcliffe.

"Sure."

"You gave me the devil of a fright."

"Which way?"

"I thought she might have been run down by some ship coming in—or something."

"Oh, she's well out of the track," said Satan.

"All the same, I didn't feel easy."

Then they hung silent, Ratcliffe's eyes on the light and his hand in his pocket feeling for dollars to pay the boatmen.

"What's there to pay?" asked he.

"A dollar, seeing there's two of them," replied Satan.

"*Sarah* ahoy!"

"Ahoy!" came Jude's voice, and a lantern swung over the side.

Satan bundled on board, and Ratcliffe crammed five dollars into the hand of the stern oar; then he followed, and the fellows pushed off.

"Took it without fightin'!" said Satan. "Lord's sake, what's come to them?" Then he bundled below to make some coffee.

Jude snuffed the lantern out.

She was moving away from the side and away from

Ratcliffe, when he caught hold of her round the body. She did not resist him. He held her close to his heart.

"Jude!"

"What is it?" asked Jude, with a sudden catch in her breath and speaking in a whisper. "Whacha want?"

Then his lips met hers, full.

Five minutes later Satan, making his coffee over the Primus stove of the *Haliotis*, heard a struggling sound, mixed with stifled laughter, and Ratcliffe appeared at the cabin door. He was dragging Jude in; she was half-resisting, and her face was hid in the crook of her arm.

"Satan," said Ratcliffe, "I'm going to marry Jude."

"God help you!" said Satan.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE WEDDING PRESENT

"I'M going to marry Jude!"

The fantastic fact embodied in those words appeared to him fully only next day at one o'clock, with the sky to northward breathing hot on Havana Harbor like the mouth of a blue oven, flags fluttering to the wind, the drum and fife band of an American training ship coming over the water, and the *Dryad* being towed to her moorings half a mile shoreward.

The blushing bride-to-be of last night, hiding her nose on Ratcliffe's shoulder, as they sat together on the couch before Satan, while he taunted her with the fact that now she'd have to get into skirts, had turned back into Jude.

She was busy getting the dinghy ready to row her fiancé off to the *Dryad*.

She was over the side in her, busy and humming a tune as she worked, baling out water, fixing the cushions, and so on, while Satan watched her in a brooding manner over the rail.

A ghastly fear was working in the heart of Satan, the fear that Skelton might want the dinghy returned.

"Now, mind you," said Satan, "and bring the boat

back. I'd sooner lose me head than that boat. If you come back without her, I'll chuck you in the harbor! I'm talking straight."

Ratcliffe, who had just come on deck dressed for the occasion, came to the rail. Jude looked up at him and laughed.

He had seen her laughing before, he had seen her surly, meditative, brooding, weeping, flushed with anger, grumbling; but he had never seen her with a look like this,—happy.

Since last night something had come into her eyes that made her, when her eyes met his, beautiful. It was as though a lamp had been suddenly lit inside her, and the magical thing was the knowledge that he himself was the lamplighter.

He had created this new something that spoke to him right out, right to his heart, right to his soul!

He got into the dinghy, nodded to Satan, and they started, Jude at the sculls, her trousers rolled half-way up to the knees and her old panama on the back of her head.

"Go slow," said he, "there's lots of time." Then, when they were out of hearing and he was alone with her at last:

"Jude!"

"What?"

"D'you remember yesterday you asked me if I was going away, now the anchor was down?"

"Yes."

"What would you have done if I had?"

THE WEDDING PRESENT 297

"I'd a drowned myself in the harbor," said Jude without a moment's hesitation. "What's the good of asking?"

"When did you begin to care for me a bit?"

"D'you remember the sandspit?" asked Jude. "I dunno—maybe it was beyond then—remember the cache?"

"When I chased you round the tree and—"

Jude screwed up her lips.

"You gave me an awful bang on the head."

"You frightened the gizzard out of me," said Jude, "and I wasn't the same after—that night."

"I remember, I heard you telling Satan that hants were chasing you."

"You were the hants."

"But you didn't care for me then. Remember you said derricks were only good for hoisting fools off ships with."

"I reckon it was a sort of caring turned inside out," said Jude. She turned her head to see if they were making for the *Dryad*.

"You're letting her off her course," said she, "unless you're making for that brig."

"I'd just as soon make for her as anywhere else," said he, altering the course, "unless it was the sandspit—Jude!"

"Yep."

"Imagine if we were alone on the sandspit, you and I, just as we were that day, instead of in this rotten old harbor—let's go there!"

"I'm willing."

"When?"

"Soon's you like."

"We can get a tent and grub, and Satan can take us there and come back for us. Damn! here's the *Dryad!*"

The first officer of the *Dryad* was leaning over the rail watching them. The stage was down, and Jude brought the dinghy alongside.

Then on the stage he watched her rowing off. He waved his hand to her, and she replied.

Then, when he reached the deck, he found Skelton also at the rail.

"'Morning," said Ratcliffe. "That's Satan's sister."

"Which?" asked Skelton. "That—er—person in the boat?"

"Yes. But you saw her on deck down at Palm Island, didn't you?"

"I had forgotten," said Skelton, dismissing the subject.

There were no guests. Ponsonby was to have come, but he was indisposed; yet the luncheon was just as formal an affair as though a dozen had been present instead of two.

Half-way through the meal, however, Ratcliffe's spirits began to brighten under the influence of Perrier Jouet and the harlequin thought that began to dance in his head, "I am going for a honeymoon to the sandspit with Jude!"

He laughed occasionally at nothing in particular, and Skelton thought his manner strange, heady, queer, and began to thank his stars that Ponsonby was indisposed. He noticed also that Ratcliffe's hands, despite scrubbing,

THE WEDDING PRESENT 299

bore the evidence of hard work not dissociated with tar. There was also something queer about his hair.

There was! Satan had barbarized it down at Cormorant with the pair of scissors he used on Jude.

Skelton, in asking Ratcliffe on board to luncheon, had considered himself a most forgiving individual. Leaving aside their little quarrel at Palm Island, remained the fact that Ratcliffe had left his ship, deserted him for the company of those Yankee "scowbankers," and, to make matters worse, Ratcliffe seemed to have enjoyed the exchange.

Now, in closer company with the delinquent, he was beginning to regret his forgiveness. "The man had deteriorated!"

As a result of this impression his manner had stiffened; he felt irritated and bored.

The steward had withdrawn, having placed the dessert on the table, and Skelton was in the act of carving a pineapple in the only way a pineapple ought to be carved,—that is to say by tearing it into pieces with two forks,—when Ratcliffe, who had been staring at the fruit as though hypnotized, suddenly broke into a chuckle of laughter.

The pineapple, connecting itself, maybe, with canned pineapples robbed from the store room of the *Haliotis*, had suddenly brought up the vision of Satan.

Satan in a new guise—Satan as a matchmaker!

All sorts of things, some almost half-forgotten, rushed together to clothe Satan in this new garment. He re-

membered Satan's solicitude for Jude's future, Satan's complacency when he and Jude had gone off to the sand-spit together, his conversations about Jude, the complete absence of surprise with which he had taken the business of last night,—a hundred things, and all pointing in the same direction and to the fact that Satan had wished the business, just as he had wished the dinghy away from Skelton, just as he had wished Ratcliffe on board of the *Sarah Tyler*.

He, Ratcliffe, was part of the sea-pickings of this gipsy, part and parcel with bunches of bananas, pots of paint, sailcloth, mainsheet buffers, cringles, and so on! He was annexed to fit Jude just as the mast-winch of the *Haliotis* was annexed to fit the *Sarah*!

Jude herself had declared that Satan had brought him on board because he "wanted him."

Skelton paused in his operation on the pineapple and stared at the other.

"I beg your pardon," said Ratcliffe, "but something has just struck me so horribly funny I couldn't help laughing—anyhow, the joke is against myself. Look here, Skelton, I want to tell you something—I'm—m—going to marry a girl."

"Indeed—but what is there horribly funny about that?"

"Nothing—it's not that, it's something else; but let's start with that. I'm going to marry that girl who rowed me over here today, Satan's sister."

Skelton laid down his fork. All his starch had vanished. Surprised out of his life, he seemed suddenly to grow younger and more natural looking.

THE WEDDING PRESENT 301

"Good God!" said Skelton, staring at the other. "You don't mean—"

"I do. I don't know why I am telling you, but there it is. You can't understand in the least—couldn't hope to make you."

Now Skelton with his starch off and in an emergency was a sound man, with a heart as good as any ordinary mortal's.

He had an eye that no little detail ever escaped. He had seen Jude at Palm Island, he had heard her speak, he had seen her half an hour ago, and Ratcliffe's manner left him in no doubt as to his absolute earnestness.

The man was about to commit suicide, social suicide. He had seen men do the same thing often in different ways.

He pushed the pineapple away and rose from the table.

"Come into the smoke room," said he.

In the smoke room he rang for coffee. Not a word about Jude. Dead silence.

Then, when the coffee was brought and the door closed, he turned to the other.

"Ratcliffe, you can't do this thing. I know. Let me speak for a moment. You are your own master, free to do as you choose; but I must speak. I like you. Our temperaments are dead different, and we don't make good companions; but you have many sterling qualities, and I don't want to see you come a mucker. You can do a thing like this in two minutes; but two hundred years won't get you out of it, once it's done. (Take

sugar in your coffee? Yes, I remember.) See here! I had a young brother once who was going to do just the same,—absolutely ruin himself. I managed to stop it, saved his future and his name.”

He picked a cigar out of a box and, coming to a dead stop in his remarks, cut the end off.

“My dear fellow,” said Ratcliffe, before he could continue, “I know absolutely and exactly how you feel on the subject and what you would say. I’ve felt it myself and said it to myself.

“I began to get fond of her almost from the first. If you’d been in my shoes, you would have been just the same. No one could help getting fond of her. Then after awhile I found how I was drifting, and I said to myself, ‘It’s absurd!’ I pictured all my female relations and so forth and my position in the wonderful thing you call Society.”

“Don’t sneer at Society,” said Skelton gravely. “That’s the easiest sort of cant that ever folly put into a man’s mouth. Go on.”

“You’re right,” said Ratcliffe. “All the same Society galls one at times when the thought of it comes up against something alive and fresh and free from snobbery like Jude. Well, things went on and on. I hadn’t much time for thinking, underhanded as we were; and that was the fatal thing, for I absorbed her without thinking,—not her face or body, but her character. You know that, underhanded and close together on a tub like the *Sarah*, character is the thing that shows and counts, and at every hand’s turn hers showed up and got a

THE WEDDING PRESENT 303

tighter grip on me. It wasn't a character all jam, either, but it was a thing to count on and real as the sea—you can't understand."

"I can," said Skelton, humoring the other, "a fine character."

"Oh, Lord, no!" said Ratcliffe. "Don't get away with things. *Real*, that's the word!"

"But, my dear man—"

"I know what you are going to say. She can't speak King's English—well, I'm going to teach her. She's dressed like that—well, I'm going to dress her properly after awhile."

Skelton suddenly showed a flash of irritation.

"Come up to the point," said he. "Are you, after what I've said, still fixed in your purpose? Are you going to marry her?"

"As soon as ever I can get a priest off to the old *Sarah*," replied Ratcliffe.

"That is your last word?"

"Yes."

"Very well," said Skelton. His manner changed. He had done what he could: it was useless. Ratcliffe was no relation of his, and now, contemplating the thing with as much detachment as though it were a losing horse race or boxing encounter on which he had no bet, he lit the cigar, which he had been holding unlighted in his fingers, and became almost amiable.

"Very well," said he, "go ahead. After all, it's not my affair; but I'll be interested to know how you get on. By the way, I have some gear of yours on board."

"Take it back, will you, like a good chap," said the other, "and leave it with the yacht people at Southampton? I'll pick it up there when I return."

"You are coming back?"

"Oh, rather; but not for a year or so, maybe. I've a lot to do, and when you see us next maybe you'll agree—" He stopped short and relit his cigar, and they hung silent, each engaged in his own thoughts.

Now, on the warm sea-scented air entering through the open ports, came a voice.

It was the voice of the second officer, addressing someone over-side.

"Hi, there! Bring her round to the quarter-boat davits; she's to come aboard."

"That's the dinghy," said Skelton. "I told them to bring her aboard. I'll send you back in the pinnace."

Again came the voice.

"Hi, there! Are you deaf? Bring her round to the quarter-boat davits; she's to come aboard."

Then Jude's fresh young voice:

"Gar'n! She's ours; old Popplecock gave her to Satan. Whacha talking about?"

"Very well," came the other's. "You wait till Si William comes on deck."

Skelton with a grim smile turned to the door. He pointed to the clock on the bulkhead.

"I'm going on deck," said he. "See that clock—promise me to stick here for two minutes by it and think right over the matter for the last time. Don't let anything I have said weigh with you."

THE WEDDING PRESENT 305

He went on deck and, keeping clear of the rail, entered into conversation with the first officer.

Three minutes passed, and Ratcliffe's head appeared at the saloon hatch.

"Going?" said Skelton.

"Yes," said Ratcliffe.

"Right! You can keep the dinghy—it's a wedding present. Luck!"

"Same to you!" said Ratcliffe.

He gripped the other's hand, and the grip was returned. The two men had never been so close to each other before, never would be again.

Two hours later the *Dryad*, queening it over the satin-smooth harbor, dipped her flag to the humble little *Sarah*, and the *Sarah* dipped her flag to the *Dryad*, and someone in the Wedding Present lying alongside the *Sarah* waved a hat.

Skelton, at the after rail, fixed his binoculars on the hat-waver. It was Satan.

THE END

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